

THE WORLD  
IN THE  
YEAR 1000

EDITED BY  
JAMES HEITZMAN  
WOLFGANG SCHENKLUHN

# **THE WORLD IN THE YEAR 1000**

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**Edited by  
James Heitzman  
Wolfgang Schenkluhn**

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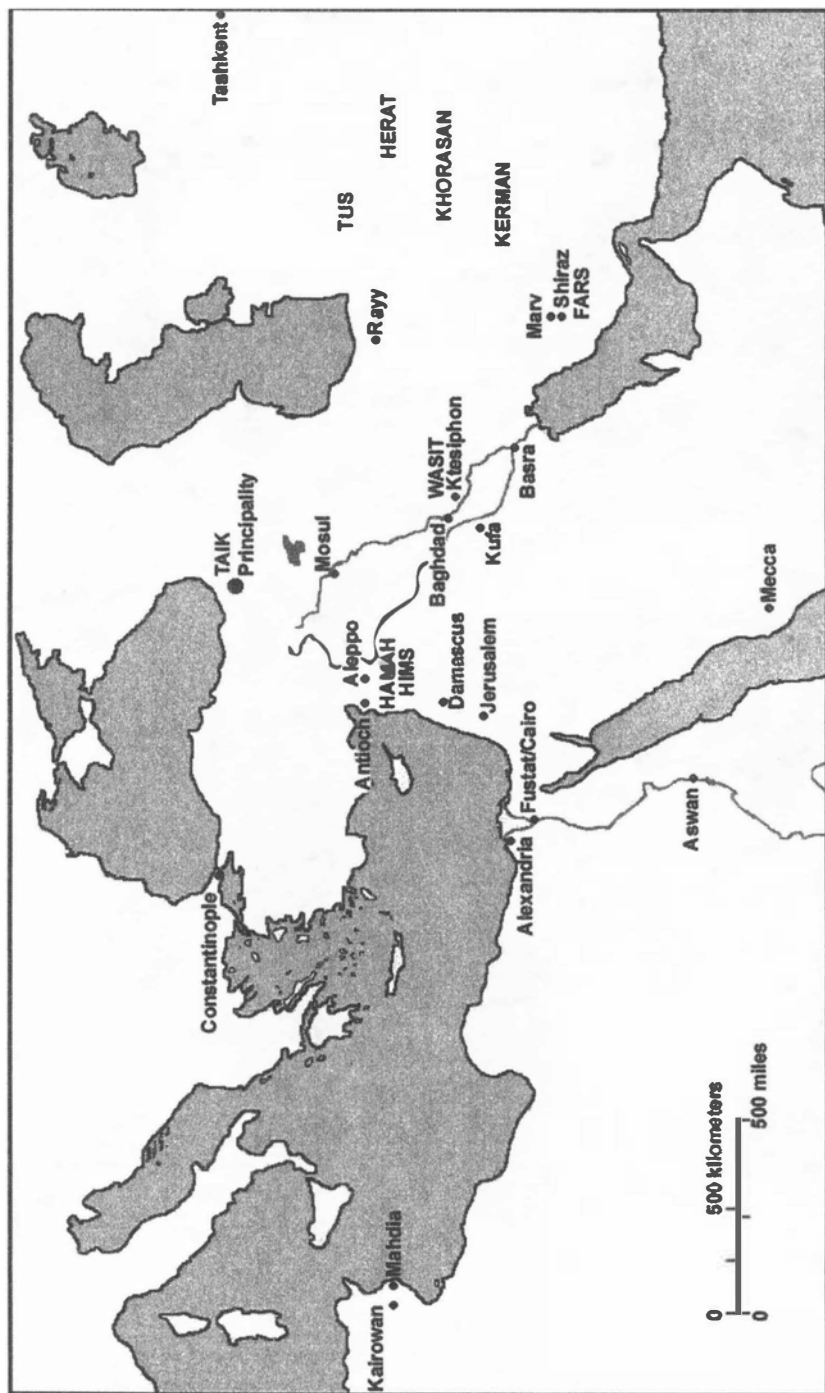
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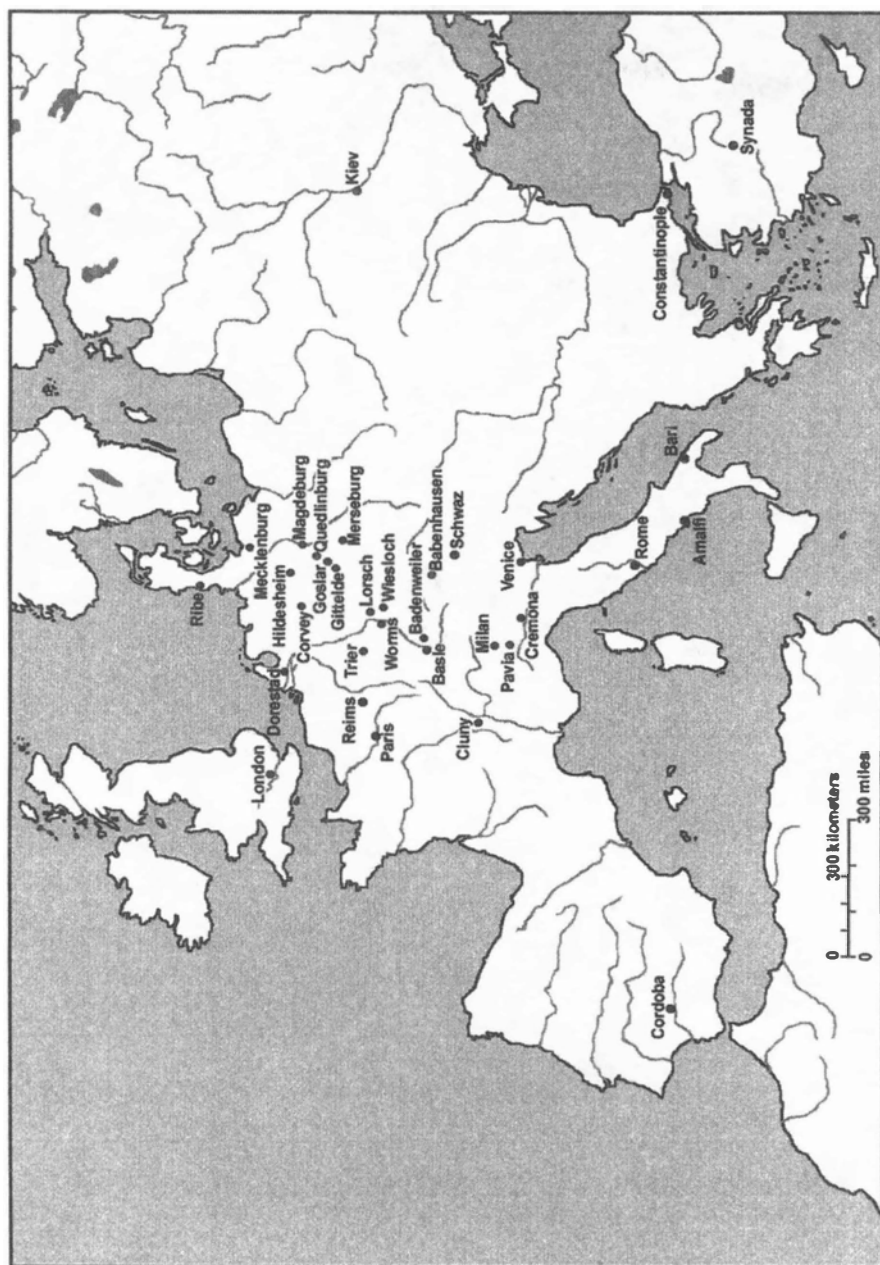
Map 1. Sites in China in the year 1000



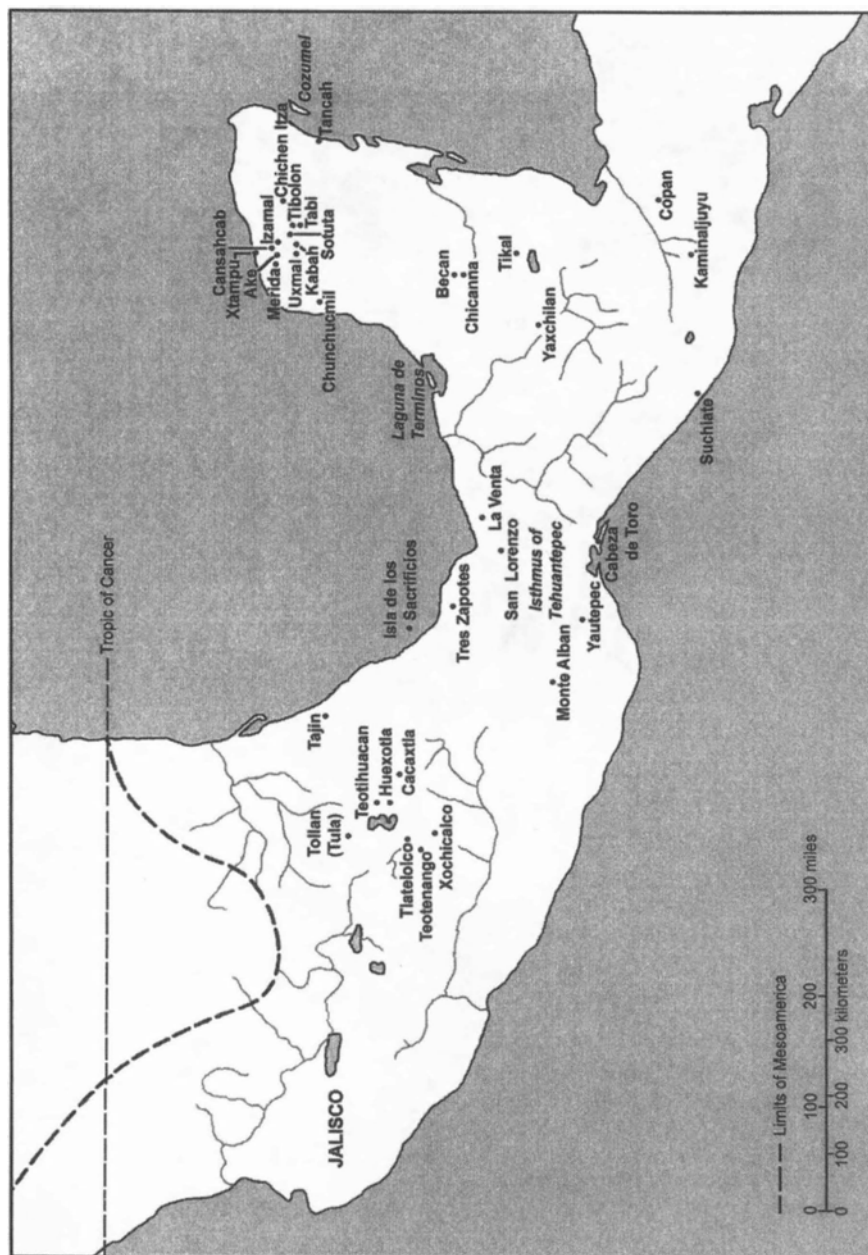
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## **Chapter 1**

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### **Introduction: World history and the year 1000**

#### **James Heitzman and Wolfgang Schenkluhn**

The Chinese historical tradition as far back as Confucius assembled a framework that addressed the issue of political disunity, positioning China as a Middle Kingdom that embodied civilized qualities, in distinction to peripheral lands where more uncultivated peoples resided. The archaic Indian picture of the world as a series of concentric islands and oceans placed South Asia, and particularly northern India, at the center of the universe. In the Mediterranean, the biblical idea of the chosen people, combined with the Greek distinction between Hellenes and barbarians and the Roman vision of western imperial destiny, provided the foundations for a Church history projecting a linear pattern of covenant and institution-building that privileged European Christians. In Enlightenment Europe, *philosophes* including Voltaire



and Montesquieu reacted against Christian historiography, constructing categories for analyzing the phenomenon of humanity in Nature. In practice they often borrowed data from distant locations like China or from “noble savages” in order to critique irrationalities within the eighteenth-century European social order through an imagined other. We see in all these constructions the uniqueness, priority or superiority of one society and its worldview in relationship to others, with comparative examples utilized for an internal critique.

The book that lies before you is an attempt to create a global understanding that does not subordinate enquiry to an overarching metaphor or master paradigm. It is part of a larger movement of historical scholarship, a “new” world history, that benefits from an explosion in empirical scholarship at all levels during the last 50 years and a growing desire to transcend the limitations of historical models resting on nations or civilizations. This process of transcendence, and this reaching toward a new type of inquiry, has motivated us to come together from a variety of sub-fields and from five continents, hoping to provide a counter-positioning of studies bearing on a single point in time: the year 1000.

Before describing the motivations and processes that led to this project, we will discuss the location of world history within the historical discipline as a whole, tracing a series of problems that have engaged scholars primarily within Euro-American intellectual circles. We will then consider the peculiar role the year 1000 has played within a scholarship originating in Europe that has influenced a “Western” understanding of development. This portrayal of the baggage we carry into the project may aid the reader in understanding how far we have come, and how far we still have to go, in creating our picture of the global past.

### **The problem of Western Civilization**

The professionalization of the discipline of history during the nineteenth century pushed most scholars toward relatively narrow fields of specialization oriented around specific geographic regions, time periods, and topics. They followed Leopold von Ranke’s leadership, in a movement labeled historicism, to delve into the archives and achieve an immersion in primary sources (mostly concerning politics and international relations) that would yield insights on the facts and motivations of the past (Tosh 2000). Perhaps the most influential global perspective became associated with the philosophy of

history presented during the 1830s by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, which freed inquiry into the past from the Church's understanding of salvation, introducing instead the principle of Reason as the motivating force behind world history. In Hegel's historical works (1975), the developmental process that moves all things and thoughts from the lower to the higher, from the simpler to the complex, occurs through the power of the "world spirit" that we may observe and know through the study of the phenomenal world. History becomes, then, the way toward self-manifesting Reason, which reaches its most advanced form in the nation state in the West. By the end of the 1840s, a new philosophy of dialectical materialism formulated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels adopted Hegel's historical stages of development that highlighted the centrality of European civilization, while stressing the economic processes lying behind the nation state. Jakob Burckhardt's *Observations on World History (Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen)* in the 1870s stood almost alone with the proposition that development and liberation were less useful for world historians than a thematic approach that analyzed the interactions of state, religion and culture. Although Burckhardt's lectures on global history (1943) accepted the primacy of the West (demonstrating, for example, an uninformed and vehement rejection of the Islamic world), his understanding of themes stands closer to scholarship informing our work in this book.

During the early twentieth century, a handful of writers attempted, with limited success, to assemble the huge mass of empirical evidence pertaining to global history in order to construct more universal perspectives. In one of the most famous examples, Oswald Spengler's magisterial *The Decline of the West (Untergang des Abendlands)*, 1926-1928) reversed the standard triumphant teleology of his colleagues by demonstrating the possibility that European hegemony was a historically bounded phenomenon subject to processes of disintegration. Arnold Toynbee's massive opus, *A Study of World History* (1948-1961), used a civilization model in order to demonstrate the evolution and diffusion of culture, ultimately relating large social formations to the manifestation of an immanent spirit. Although professional historians may have admired these Herculean efforts to pull together source materials for world history, most remained skeptical of the cultural or spiritual frameworks that underlay these projects, and they remained firmly committed to more limited horizons.

The main intellectual effort to understand the past at a global level occurred outside history departments. Marxism offered a comprehensive understanding of history and a program for action through the related concepts of the dialectic and the mode of production. While

Marxism was achieving political power in the Soviet Union and then Eastern Europe and East Asia, institutionalizing the study of socioeconomic formations within a series of stages, its opponents were constructing alternative understandings of capitalism's progress that coalesced in development studies. The problems of de-colonization, the Cold War, and poverty alleviation then exerted a profound effect on the presentation of the past as a complex of processes and planning decisions. Meanwhile, social science disciplines including sociology, geography and anthropology became departments within university systems, each staking claims to the study of humanity's past in global terms. One of the most influential responses to these challenges from within the historical profession was the *Annales* school (beginning in 1929 with the publication of the journal *Annales d'histoire sociale et économique*), which set itself the task of absorbing currents and methodologies from multiple disciplines in order to relate the material conditions of life at the micro-level to large-scale phenomena over the long duration (Dosse 1994). In general, these multidisciplinary efforts exerted little impact on the research agendas of most historians, who remained firmly embedded in the methodological problems of their almost entirely written source materials and bounded spatial and temporal coordinates.

In the United States, the close relationship between the historical discipline and the geopolitics of the nation state found expression in the Western History survey course, which became the basic experience in non-American history for most undergraduate students. This course, designed to mold American citizens, originated as a response to the experience of World War I and an enhanced involvement in European affairs thereafter. It rested on the premise that the educated public, regardless of its ethnic background, required a basic understanding of the world region that ostensibly had provided the largest contribution to North American culture and institutional forms. As in Europe, the imaginative construction of the West paradoxically began in the East, with Mesopotamia and Egypt, and inexorably moved through Greece toward Rome, Western Europe, and then the Americas. During most of the twentieth century, a large percentage of the total class sections offered by the typical history department in the United States consisted of this course. Usually there were two parts, divided at either the early sixteenth century (the "discovery" of the Americas, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution) or the late eighteenth century (the American and French Revolutions).

The American experience of World War II in Europe and subsequent immersion in the problems of the Iron Curtain only added fuel to the

power of Western Civilization, that saga of white men, that epic of East-West confrontation. The emergence of the United States as a global superpower, however, stimulated a growing concern with other world regions. Despite the concentration of conventional and nuclear arsenals within a frozen European geopolitical system, Europeans and Americans found their widest opportunities and their greatest defeats in Asia and Africa, where revolution, newly emerging nations, raw-material extraction and the expansion of capitalism created the most dynamic situations. For security purposes, the U.S. government transferred resources to universities that supported foreign-language training and area studies programs specializing in "non-Western" regions. History departments throughout the United States accumulated a growing minority of faculty members who no longer specialized only in European or American history. By the early 1970s, when the defeat in Vietnam called into question the westward mission of America, new challenges to the standard presentation of politics and economics and white men were coming from (among others) social history, women's history, ethnohistory, structuralism and post-structuralism. These movements expanded the definition of historical enquiry and opened up new worlds for investigation, undermining the hegemony of the Western Civilization metaphor.<sup>2</sup>

William McNeil's *The Rise of the West* (1963), which sold well among the general public, marked an important breakthrough in world-historical approaches that paid homage to earlier writers such as Toynbee and still gave lip service to western progress, but radically de-centered the sphere of inquiry. This author's main concern was the complex of conditions that allowed the hitherto backward region of Western Europe to achieve a position of dominance after the fifteenth century. The reasons lay not in some immanent character of its civilization, but in the historically contingent conditions of global systems that underlay the partial unification of the globe 1,500 years earlier and the networks of technology, diffusion and commerce that Europeans later were able to exploit. McNeil's subsequent work on topics ranging from epidemiology (1976) to militarization (1982), and the emergence of a core group of scholars interested in global historical issues, set the stage for the formation of the World History Association in the early 1980s and its affiliation with the American Historical Association.<sup>3</sup>

A limited number of history departments in the United States began to abolish their Western Civilization courses and substitute for them courses on World Civilization; several departments began offering programs specializing in world history.<sup>4</sup> For the most part, innovations

were limited to offering world history courses alongside, or as an alternative to, the standard Western Civilization courses, which in turn were undergoing their own transformation through increasing inputs from social history and other sub-fields. Major publishing houses began producing textbooks and collections of source materials designed to support world historical approaches. World history became a legitimate career path for professionals, who generated an increasing range of interdisciplinary and comparative studies.

### The year 1000 and the West

We have often thought how useful it would be to historical inquiry, and generally to an understanding of mankind, if we were to take up a position at some fixed moment in time—not merely in order to examine that moment itself, but so that we might grasp in all their fullness the vistas that spread out around it: in other words, to make a survey of a site, a terrain which could then serve us as our point of observation. It has seemed both desirable and possible to us to choose a year, a climactic year, and first to empty it of its own content. The matter is more difficult than might appear at first glance—more suitably entrusted to the labors of a team than to the researches of a single historian.

Thus did the first page of Henri Focillon's *The Year 1000* (1969) introduce the possibility that a single point in time might provide the overarching framework for a comparative historical methodology. The terrain surveyed by Focillon encompassed the old Carolingian Empire, including parts of modern France, Germany, the Low Countries and Italy—a magisterial accomplishment, but still a perspective limited to parts of Central and Western Europe. He was interested in the millennium as a caesura separating the invasions, disorder and terrors unleashed by the decline of the Carolingians from a new period that built the High Middle Ages. As an old-school master of the historian's craft, Focillon employed an almost nineteenth-century appreciation for adjectives and hyperbole that strengthened pride in the Western Civilization and one's nation—in his case, France. The year 1000, as a transition toward the rise of the West, was for him not simply a site or terrain, but "a great moment in the history of mankind" (pp. 74-75), contributing to the momentous movement toward modernity. The remainder of humanity remained of decidedly secondary significance.<sup>5</sup>

In Focillon's privileging of the West, we see that his focus on the year 1000 still participated in a Hegelian discourse on developmental history that utilized the limited observation of a revolutionary situation

to determine the beginnings of a long-term process leading toward modernity. During the late twentieth century, the year 1000 thus came to signify a recurring and complex debate on the possibility that a specific moment in history could generate wide-ranging and long-lasting impacts on an entire world region. The proximate issue was the beginning of *féodalité* or feudalism, a supplanting of the social organization bequeathed by antiquity or by the Carolingians, those rejuvenators of antiquity. The ultimate goal was to provide an understanding of the conditions that shifted the West toward a new trajectory, a novel mode of production and exchange with specific political and intellectual configurations, that would underpin its eventual climb to a dominant position within a world system.

In this context, the work of Georges Duby became critical during the 1970s. Conducting detailed work on the terminology embedded within sources from the area of France around Mâcon, and in particular the rich corpus of donation contracts associated with the monastery of Cluny, this scholar put forward the thesis that a major shift in the organization of political and military elites took place at the end of the tenth century. Older authorities such as counts or dukes, already usurpers of royal power, now found their effectiveness eroded by a new stratum of castellans insinuating themselves into the rural economy. The interactions between older centers of power and these armed intermediaries holed up in their forts eventually produced hierarchies of lords and vassals that appropriated the prerogatives of the state, which emanated only a ritual sovereignty from greatly restricted territories in northern France. It was the beginning of the French nobility. At precisely the period when external invasions disappeared, Western Europe began a process of internal reorganization that eclipsed the empire and allowed the emergence of new political relationships that eventually led to the nation state.

In a later book dedicated specifically to the year 1000, Duby presented a series of excerpts from literature mostly produced by men in monasteries, in order to explore the mentalities of the age. The readings early in the book portray a world lying prone before the wrath of God, racked by famine and war, where even the literati perceive prodigies and wonders as signs of the combat between salvation and evil. The picture corresponds to the well-established vision of the Dark Ages:

A savage world, a practically virgin nature, very few people armed with pitiful tools, battling with bare hands against the vegetal forces and the powers of the earth, incapable of dominating them, struggling to tear from

them a very poor nourishment, ruined by intemperate climate, racked periodically by famine and malady, gripped constantly by hunger. . . A very hierarchical society, troops of slaves, a peasant people tragically deprived, entirely submissive to the power of a few families deployed in more or less illustrious networks but linking solidly the force of hereditary lines around a single trunk. . . A few chiefs, masters of war or of prayer, surveying on horseback a miserable universe, extracting from the poor the riches to adorn their persons, their palaces, the relics of the saints and the abodes of God (Duby 1980: 32-33).

By the end of the book, however, Duby attempted to demonstrate a remarkable change occurring around the year 1000, as if the people of Western Europe had hit rock bottom and were beginning to gain control of their lives:

In the history of mental attitudes, where I have situated almost all of my remarks and in function of which all these texts have been chosen and presented, what signifies in truth the Year One Thousand of the incarnation and redemption? The allure of a major turning point, the passage from a ritual and liturgical religion—that of Charlemagne, that also of Cluny—to a religion of action that incarnates itself—that of pilgrims to Rome, Saint James and the Holy Sepulchre, soon that of the crusades. At the heart of terrors and phantasms, a very preliminary perception of the dignity of humanity. Here, in the night, in this tragic indigence and in this savagery, begins the centuries-long victory of European thought (Duby 1980: 284).

Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel elevated this discourse to the level of a veritable historical paradigm with their influential opus, *The Feudal Transformation*, originally published in 1980. For them, the close of the tenth century witnessed the end of an ancient mode of production based on independent peasant communities and the institutionalization of serfdom: “Within two or three generations dependence had become the rule and freedom the exception. Now the lord’s *bannum* extended everywhere; the Caesars were legion.” Thus a “crisis” occurred during “crucial decades,” and “the structures were crystallized that were to govern, or claim to govern, society in the following centuries” (Poly and Bournazel 1991, 352, 354). The “death of the state” had to precede its eventual rebirth. In a collection of research papers originally presented in 1987 at seminars marking the 1,000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crowning of Hugh Capet as king of France, the editor recapitulated an argument that had become conventional wisdom:

Historians, beyond their quarrels on causes, reasons, modalities, development, first consequences, seem to agree in dating to the period preceding or immediately following the Year 1000 the increasingly irresistible expansion of the West. This expansion, in several centuries, imposed upon the world the original model of the society in which we live (Delort 1990, 8).

Guy Bois (1992) contributed a synthetic understanding to this paradigm by focusing on a single village, Lournand, in the Mâconnais, where the abbey of Cluny was expanding its presence during the tenth and eleventh centuries. This was a micro-history that expressed long-term continuities and large-scale changes, outlining processes that affected socio-economic structure and led to the violent birth of a new structure or system. The author noted the continuing importance in the tenth century of a servile condition indistinguishable from slavery, affecting perhaps 15 percent of the rural population, in a remarkable continuation of ancient relationships. Unlike the situation apparent in the Carolingian *polyptychs* which portrayed an early form of the manorial economy, the primary form of proprietorship was the private (allodial) property of freeborn small and medium peasants, with a tiny stratum of richer "masters" exercising hegemony within rural communities. With the growth of trade and towns, accompanied by the final disintegration of the counts' public authority in favor of localized lordships (the *seigneuries* of castellans and religious institutions), the encapsulation of agrarian production within its network of hamlets and conjugal relations disintegrated. Alongside the loss of specious personal freedoms came the autonomy of the economy. The Church, the nobility, serfdom, and the bourgeoisie became its social categories. This "revolution" lasted about half a century around the year 1000, a time of unrestrained ambition and violence:

Feudal society was constructed in the eleventh century, throughout the whole of Europe, on new bases; its classes were not the same; its social imagery, that is, the famous tripartite division into *oratores* (those who prayed), *milites* (those who fought) and *laboratores* (those who worked), had nothing in common with what preceded it; its social frontiers were differently located, thereby indicating that the changes were not a matter of form but resulted from a vast recomposition of the social. Of course, the new society did not spring suddenly from nowhere; an interminable period of gestation preceded its birth. Many elements were gradually put into place before coming together to form a new social system. But a rupture there clearly was (Bois 1992, 35).



In a synthetic treatment, Thomas Bisson encapsulated the arguments still acceptable to many specialists in his characterization of “a crisis of fidelity in the millennial generation”:

The invasions had ended—or at least the foreign ones had. But there were more armed and fortified men about than ever, more people to dominate in growing populations, more agrarian wealth for the taking. While violence and the arrogation of patrimonial power remained unjust, the failure of old remedies together with the accelerated diffusion of judicial powers in lands too vast for weakened lord-kings to master emboldened the ambitious in self-justifying and arbitrary habits that assured an irreversible dynamic of their own. Disruption occurred when the violence of lordship could no longer be contained (Bisson 1994, 21-22).

His argument alluded to the “unwritten story framed in a familiar chronology: a story of relentless seigneurial aggrandizement held in check by old theocratic regimes only to burst into violence in the end,” a process spreading from southern and central France to England, Germany, Normandy, and Léon-Castille by the turn of the twelfth century, when “bad lordship came of age” (Bisson 1994, 29, 33).<sup>6</sup> The characteristics of the millennium in France thus served as the model exemplifying the long-term history of Western Europe as a whole.

In opposition to the conventional wisdom, a group of dissenting scholars including Dominique Barthélemy (1996) assembled a group of arguments that countered the notion of a radical rupture, stressing a more gradualist interpretive framework and shifting the periodization of crucial changes to the ninth and the late eleventh centuries. This alternative approach led to an analysis so nuanced that it eliminated the significance of the millennium while still fixated on its centrality. Thus an entire volume on the year 1000 ended with the rather banal characterization of the year:

It is one and multiple, incoherent in the specificity of regions and, notably, in political structures. In this it hardly differentiates itself from what existed before and what would come later. . . an ordinary epoch that we would like to believe extraordinary (Bourin and Parisse 1999, 206).

Scholars specializing in other parts of Europe, who observed these debates, tended to distance themselves in practice from a millennial argument that privileged developments occurring in France. But as the year 2000 approached, retrospective works that looked back a thousand years appeared from all quarters. In Heinrich Fichtenau’s work on the tenth century (1991),<sup>7</sup> the author described the impending Year of the

Millennium as the inspiration for considering attitudes in Europe a thousand years earlier. His main project was to engage with structuralist ideas coming from anthropologists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and filtered through post-*Annales* historians such as Duby, shifting interest from kingship and state formation toward the life experience and mentalities of lower and middle levels in society. As the year 2000 finally appeared on the horizon, British journalists Lacey and Danziger, in consultation with an extended network of professional historians, produced a highly-readable book entitled *The Year 1000* (1999) that overtly targeted an English readership fascinated by millennial thought and curious about their Anglo-Saxon forebears before the 1066 Norman Conquest. This volume used the twelve illustrated pages of the Julius Work Calendar as a window on everyday life in addition to political, economic, and religious developments involving interaction with continental Europe. Aleksander Gieysztor's contribution (1997) to millennial contemplation described a revolutionary transition, but from an Eastern European perspective: the conversion to Christianity of the kingdoms of Sweden, Hungary, Poland and Kiev signaled the creation for the first time of an early European Community.

Most scholars have considered, but generally played down, the possibility that the year 1000 may have had widespread significance within the Christian world as the end of days. In a world of profound illiteracy, where calendars differed from one region to the next, it was difficult in any case for anyone to say what time it was! For historians, therefore, the significance of the millennium lies in its role as the marker of changes in political economy, primarily in what became France. It becomes globally significant if one positions it within a larger debate on the rise of the West, assuming that France led the way into a new social system that eventually affected all of Europe, which in turn affected the rest of the world. This understanding may still attract the interest of scholars focused on Western Europe (although less attractive the farther one stands from France); it seems increasingly irrelevant to historical consciousness in the multi-polar world of the twenty-first century.

Our approach to these debates suggests that the more recent scholarly debates on the year 1000 as a definitive wave or turning point in European history (heavily influenced by more recent concerns with the year 2000) have overrated both the revolutionary import of the millennium and the value of a strictly European perspective.<sup>8</sup> Our book indicates that other regional cultures in the year 1000, operating within quite different calendar systems, did not find that year or that time

period to be particularly important. From the perspective of contemporaries, Europe did not seem to be developing in an especially interesting way, for other regions were playing much more dominant roles in an interconnected Afro-Eurasian economic and political network, while supporting more original and complex scientific, literary or artistic outputs. From our current perspective, one would have to stretch analysis too far to claim that the direction of development in Western Europe, even if it fit within one overarching framework, represented a shift for the entire Afro-Eurasian world. Only around 1500 did European economic growth, based on the growth of its urbanization and participation within a world system since the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Abu-Lughod 1989), underpin an expansion of Europe leading to global colonialism and imperialism. Enrique Dussel has recently suggested (1998) that a *transmodern* theoretical perspective of Europe as center of a “500-year” world system requires an understanding of imperialism in the Americas as the crucial comparative advantage for a previously peripheral region during negotiations within the third stage of an Afro-Eurasian interregional system. We view the multi-regional and multi-thematic collection of essays in our book as a contribution toward the de-centering of Europe in world history, and a step toward a pluralistic methodology that informs transmodern theory and methodology.

### **The Year 1000 Collective**

The initiatives for a collective study of the year 1000 began in 1996 as a series of discussions between Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, a scholar of social and economic history working at Hannover University, and the renowned administrator Jurg Steiner from Berlin. Originally they wanted only to create a presentation at the entrance to the theme park of the planned Expo 2000 World Fair in Hannover. In distinction to the mainly futuristic concept of the Fair that dealt with the development of humanity in the coming century, they wanted to present a retrospective look at the threshold of the second millennium, with the motto “The future begins in the past.” The question was simple: where did “we” stand during the last millennial transition? And because the question occurred at a world fair: where did “we” stand in a global community? This comprehensive retrospective should take place amid a variety of original artistic works from all corners of the globe. Thus the comparative focus on a single, composite, temporal transition did not arise

only through academic research interests, but rather through contemporary cultural interests.

A proposal was submitted with the participation of Wolfgang Schenkluhn, involved as a historian of medieval art, but unfortunately this gigantic project finally existed only in the form of a large installation because of cost and security issues (Roth and Schormann et al. 2000). Under the leadership of Brüggemeier and Schenkluhn, the project moved in a scholarly direction with support from the Volkswagen Foundation in Hannover. They obtained funds for a research group<sup>9</sup> that would investigate “the World in the Year 1000” as a unified concept through a text-and-sources volume, a thematic volume, and an international conference. A scholarly advisory committee<sup>10</sup> would cooperate with the leaders in carrying out these projects.

The first result of this collaboration was a book entitled *Menschen im Jahr 1000 (People in the Year 1000)* edited by Brüggemeier and Hoffmann (1999) with assistance from Georg Berkemer (an expert on Southeast Asia), Andreas Brockmann (Mesoamerica), Stefan Eisenhofer (Africa), Volkhard Huth (Europe and Byzantium), and Angela Schottenhammer (China). This book was a collection of 109 textual excerpts coming from 75 sources of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, translated into German with introductory notes from the editors. Approximately 25 percent of the selections were from China, the Islamic world, and Europe each, with 13 sources from India, five from Byzantium and Mexico each, three describing eastern Africa, and one from Japan (Murasaki’s *Tale of Genji*).

This first volume, while breaking new ground, raised several issues affecting the motivations of the authors of the present volume.

- The first problem is connected to the type of source materials under consideration. As soon as one limits the enquiry to written records, large expanses of the globe disappear from the inquiry, erasing most of the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, Northern Asia, and Austronesia from the picture. While one might argue that the regions of the world yielding a corpus of literary materials represent a substantial percentage of humanity at that time, and thus remain essential for scholarship, one would also prefer to avoid the privileging of a limited range of cultures or civilization complexes. A truly global understanding of the human condition in the year 1000 would require an interdisciplinary effort involving anthropologists, archaeologists, numismatists, linguists, and art historians, and would examine societies in all regions.

- A second problem concerns the peculiar perspectives and interests of the authors who compiled the surviving literary corpus. The ability to read and write was a hard-won skill limited to specialist elites, scholarly lineages that regularly performed administrative services for political and economic power-holders. Writers mirrored the attitudes of their high-ranking contemporaries by regularly limiting their descriptions to the well-to-do, the powerful, and the city-dweller, who often expressed disdain or a condescending attitude toward the peasants, workers and servants who surrounded them. The vast majority of the population had interests often quite alien from those of the status and class minorities who governed them. Even within the limited number of regions accessible to the historian, we must work hard to see the lived experience of most people.
- The third problem relates to the regional variations in the source materials. For example, in Europe around the year 1000, the most coherent chronicles are the hand-written products of monks, alongside a more limited range of surviving administrative correspondence, epics, and political chronicles; a necessarily limited ecclesiastical or hagiographic perspective runs through most of the records. In China, where paper and print technology were already expanding, the administrators working for the Sung polity produced encyclopedic accounts and opinion pieces bearing on contemporary affairs, but the authors remained deeply embedded in the categories and imperatives of a neo-Confucian or Buddhist ethos. For Mexico, the surviving fragments that ostensibly describe the world of the Toltecs come from collections of the sixteenth century, left by the Aztecs to a conquering Spanish clergy, requiring a leap of imagination covering over 500 years and filtered through two intervening world-views. The vast literature from the Islamic world, perhaps the most cosmopolitan region in the year 1000, comes mostly from literati deeply immersed in the conceptual categories of Hellenism and an Arabic-Persian heritage. Of course, the cultural specificity of the regional literatures provides for us exactly the kind of comparative possibilities desired in a global inquiry, but also requires from the reader a sensitivity to the embedding of each region within its own deep intellectual currents.

The collaborators in the first collection made a decision at the start of the project to cut into the source material through a series of themes. They thus avoided the temptation to organize experience within categories of political economy that typically form the framework for

historical discourse. Nonetheless, the section entitled “Lordship, Power and Myth” remains the largest in the book, revealing less about the facts of political and military struggles than about the varied systems under construction for legitimating power and authority. The second largest section, “Religion, Piety and Worldly Renunciation,” provides examples of the wide range of religious experience preserved for us from a millennium ago, demonstrating the remarkable permanence of Christian, Muslim, Jaina/Buddhist/Hindu, and Confucian categories as markers of culture for world regions. The section on “Meetings” presages the inquiry pursued in the present volume on the perception of others and cross-cultural contacts, and includes some remarkable portrayals of trade down the eastern coast of Africa, involving the slave trade and the spread of Islam. The section “By the Sweat of their Brows” explores a wide range of perspectives on labor, ranging from quasi-mythological memories of the long-vanished Toltecs as master craftsmen to the story of the Chinese inventor of moveable type. The section on “The Enjoyment of Life” contains some of the most poetic selections, and features the pleasures of feasting and good manners, the eroticism of the dance and the disasters of tragic love, the scandals of imperial families, and the warnings of Jaina monks against the enticements of women. The section on “Health, Illness and Medicine” demonstrates the centrality of physical examination and scholarly communication in the Islamic and Confucian worlds, but also shows the importance of food and medicinal plants in medical practice. Amid tales of some heroic and successful physicians, the several readings on quackery indicate that medical professionalism was a distant goal for most sufferers. In “The Search for Law,” we see the ritual revenge of Quetzalcoatl and the attempt by the Church in Western Europe to limit blood feuds through the Peace of God; meanwhile, the bilking of credulous townspeople by a supposed holy man reveals the importance of monetary payments for settling murder cases in Iran and Afghanistan. Finally, in the section on “Education and Knowledge,” we see the great respect accorded to learning and to teachers, and the great efforts required by students even to see a specific book or to consult an educator under conditions of poor transportation and communication.

The second product of the Year 1000 Collective was a volume entitled *Die Welt im Jahr 1000* (2000), edited by Brüggemeier and Schenkluhn. This volume includes dozens of color photographs, maps, and high-level but accessible analyses by the earlier contributors, in addition to contributions by Stefan Eisenhofer and Wolfgang Reinhard and inputs from many consultants based in German universities.

As in the first volume, this publication approaches the wide range of disparate materials through a series of thematic essays. The first piece by Berkemer deals with systems for reckoning time. The author demonstrates the total irrelevance of the year 1000 in most of the world's regions which based their calendars on different starting points, and the almost complete dependence of the vast majority of the world's people on personal observation of the heavens for any sense of temporality. The essay on "The Sources" by Huth mostly concentrates on the wide range of literary or artistic materials available from different regions, analyzing the intentions leading to their production and preservation (or, in some cases, their later forgery). There is also an excursion (pp. 76-84) into the problematic of source materials from Sub-Saharan Africa for this period. Brockmann's survey of "Agrarian Systems" concentrates on the centrality of grains to production systems embedded within varying cosmologies and articulations to lordship, exploring also beverages, textiles, animal husbandry, and the technologies of water management. The section on "Cities" by Hoffmann provides some statistics on the scale of urbanization: In a world where "urban" sites averaged around 5,000 people, the largest settlements, with about 500,000 inhabitants, included Kaifeng and Quanzhou (Canton) in China and Constantinople in Byzantium, followed by Baghdad, Cairo and Cordoba with perhaps 300,000 people. In Europe, the Italian cities of Venice, Pavia, and Milan had populations of perhaps 20,000, while London had around 12,000 and Paris 2,000. We are still at least one century away from the period when trading cities achieved liberation from agrarian lordship; the largest concentrations of population were gravitating toward centers of imperial administration, where they developed the world's most dynamic arts, crafts, education, and entertainment. The final essay by Schottenhammer deals with communication, transportation and interactions among world regions, concentrating not only on the kinds of persons and the limited technologies allowing trans-regional contacts, but also the range of opinions on foreigners and foreign lands developed among people who rarely moved far from home.

The third project, an international conference on "The World in the Year 1000," took place in Halle, Germany, 6-9 April 2000, ostensibly as an adjunct of Expo 2000 held in Hannover. The goal at the Halle conference was to expand the dialogue to scholars throughout the world who were doing work on the tenth and eleventh centuries. In general, the themes of the conference were planned as an expansion on those themes that had already appeared in the two published volumes; concepts that had not appeared explicitly, but which seemed to the

collective to be important for comparative purposes, informed the conference agenda. The papers solicited by the conference organizers, Brüggemeier and Schenkluhn, fell within four categories: the use of nature, economic awakening, religion and cult, perception of self and others. Invitees included experts on East Asia, South Asia, the Islamic world, Europe, and Mesoamerica. The presenters at the conference, along with the organizers and audience participants, decided to pull together revised papers and publish them in a volume that would be accessible to students and to the wider public, while still retaining the contours of a research collection. The Volkswagen Foundation graciously agreed to provide additional funding to defray publishing expenses. The result is the assembly of pieces you hold before you, organized within the categories informing the conference in 2000 ("cult" here has disappeared in favor of "ritual centers"), and including a paper on Southeast Asia in an attempt to provide a more seamless coverage of Eurasia.

In its review of the world in the year 1000, the research projects of the collective have concentrated on the economic and cultural aspects of southwest, south, and eastern Asia, with excursions into the more "peripheral" regions of Europe, northern Africa and Mesoamerica. We must apologize for the absence from this volume of materials on sub-Saharan Africa, northern Asia, and North and South America, made difficult because of the primarily non-literary character of source materials. Here the collective has certainly come up against its current limits, which should not lead to reader to underestimate the contributions of those regions within a more general evaluation of our time period. The projects carried out so far provide only a framework for further excursions into other regions or disciplines during the tenth and eleventh centuries. A more difficult question remains the role of Europe in a global context—a region still quite "undeveloped" before the year 1000—and its volcanic explosion after 1500 with the "discovery" of the Americas and the Reformation. A follow-up project could certainly adopt a later vantage point, perhaps sometime around 1250, when the face of Europe was being transformed through scholasticism and cathedral-building. The first important steps in Europe's rise certainly lay in its reception of Arabic scholarship and "eastern" cultures; a future initiative would concentrate more strongly on the transfer of art, science and culture.

The contributors to this volume have attempted to present material designed for scholarly professionals, advanced students, and the educated public that may help to build a dialogue on a new understanding of world history. We view the case studies in this



volume as an attempt to address the issues raised in the first two projects, and a step toward a wider debate. Even a cursory perusal of the chapter titles or contents in this volume will demonstrate the limited importance of Europe from a global perspective, but also the dubiousness of an exercise that sees in the year 1000 some premonition of a European-dominated world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This was a world of multiple centers, emerging regional systems, innovative technologies, and cross-cultural contacts supported through trade, but we witness neither an overarching world system nor a general vector of development affecting multiple regions simultaneously. Accustomed to historical approaches that trace one big story over time, we may feel uncomfortable facing an array of studies that reveal the connections but also the discrete facets of a disunited world. Let us view these studies, then, as a series of snapshots that lift the curtain on a human condition irreducible to a unitary teleology and comprehensible only through models of complexity still under construction.

The World 1000 Collective has been among the most wide-ranging initiatives among the variety of “millennium projects,” for none has taken the global perspective more to heart. The initiators are still of the opinion that this perspective, highly appropriate for future development, will become a more established and common strategy. In any case, we never predicted the full measure of interesting comparisons, viewpoints, and judgements emerging through this work. Without a doubt, they exceeded all expectations.

## Notes

1. Costello (1992) and Pomper et al. (1995) contextualize the classics of early world historians within larger intellectual debates.

2. See Dunn 2000 for a series of discussions on Western Civilization courses in the United States, and their relationship to the field of world history.

3. Bentley (1996) contextualizes McNeill’s work within the larger continuum of world historians in a short (36 pp.) essay. See the web pages of the World History Association at <http://www.woodrow.org/teachers/world-history>.

4. See, for example, the World Civilizations Program at the University of Hawaii (<http://www.hawaii.edu/history/wciv.htm>) founded in 1985, the World History Center at Northeastern University (<http://www.whc.neu.edu>) founded in 1994, and the World History Specialization founded at Georgia State University in 2001.

5. For Focillon, Rome and the Romanesque stood for the rule of law and order, vigor and variety. Despite its brilliance, the East in general, and

Byzantium in particular, represented senescence, academism, and a lack of vigor. The Islamic world, behind its undeniable accomplishments, was a land of infidels and the unfree, bringing with it pillage and destruction. Deeply immersed in the prejudices of the World Wars, the author reserved special scorn for things Germanic, tracing twentieth-century catastrophes to Germany's provincial, archaic and unoriginal national characteristics. Africans were in his view primitive, and the Irish endowed with a "clannish spirit" (p. 106). This tendency to reify national or racial groups and then endow them with essential qualities may have enlivened the tale for European readers, but hardly contributed to a global perspective on human affairs. For this author, the map of the world that mattered in the year 1000 was a circle centered on Ile-de-France with a 1000-kilometer radius.

6. A short summary of these arguments and counter-arguments exists in Bonnassie 2001, 9-16.

7. The book was originally published in 1984 as *Lebensordnung des 10. Jahrhunderts* (*Orders of Living in the Tenth Century*).

8. See the example of Cardini (1995).

9. The scholarly collective at that point included Georg Berkemer (Ludwigshafen), Andreas Brockmann (Münster), Gerhard Hoffmann (Leipzig), Volkhard Huth (Freiburg), and Angela Schottenhammer (Hamburg).

10. The project advisory committee, constituted in 1998 in Halle, included Gunnar Brands, Professor for Archaeology and the Art of the Christian Orient, University of Halle-Wittenburg; Ulrich Haarmann, Professor of Islamic Studies and Director of the Orientalistik-Zentrum in Berlin (sadly, Dr. Haarmann passed away during the course of the project); Ulrich Köhler, Professor of Ancient American Studies and Director of the Institute of Ethnology at the Albert-Ludwigs-University of Freiburg; Ludolf Kuchenbuch, Professor of Ancient History at the Fernuniversität Hagen; Hermann Kulke, Professor of Asian History at the University of Kiel; and Dieter Kuhn, Professor of Sinology and Director of the Institute for Sinology at the University of Würzburg.

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## **Part I**

### **Natural orders, social orders**



## **Chapter 2**

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### **Nature and Environment in Europe: Perceiving, Taming, Harnessing**

#### **Gerhard Jaritz**

Around the year 1000, a “simultaneity of contrasts in context” was the foundation for the comprehension and utilization of nature and the environment in Europe. Nature represented danger, ferocity, wilderness and wildness, but also constituted the indispensable basis of human existence, particularly in its “tamed,” civilized, and cultivated appearance. A long tradition of discourses, sometimes ambivalent and ambiguous, but often clearly interdependent, supported these ideas.

From a general point of view, we have to be aware that one receives information about the relation of Europeans to nature and the landscape in which they lived mainly through various written sources—or through their silence. Something was usually only named or described



if it was situated “outside of us,” being other, strange, unused, or unknown. Normal, well-known, and daily aspects were often not worth talking about (Fumagalli 1992, 30). This is particularly true for the time around 1000, when written evidence was only rarely produced and mainly originated from one specific stratum of society, in particular monks and clerics.<sup>1</sup> It also means, however, that the needs, reactions and mentality of illiterates must have informed and influenced, at least partly, the reflections of a literate culture concerning nature and the environment (Glacken 1967, 313-317; Squatriti 1998, 76). The “language” of nature and the discourse about human communication and interaction with nature were clearly dependent on and connected with patterns and significances, types and stereotypes, created and applied code-systems, positive and negative connotations, and particular “contrasts.” Moreover, the evidence about the relations between man and nature also has to be seen as a story of success and failure.

Generally, one may follow David Herlihy (1980, 100-116), who distinguished four sets of attitudes toward nature and environment within medieval European culture:

- The first attitude, which he called “eschatological,” was founded upon an effort to assess the present state of the world, or of nature, in the light of the presumed ultimate destiny of humanity.
- An “adversarial” attitude implied fear and awe of nature as the abode of mysterious monsters, spirits and powers inimical to men.
- A “collaborative” attitude affirmed that “man, like nature itself, could shape and change the environment.”
- A “recreational” attitude defined the contemplation of the natural world as “a source of psychological and spiritual refreshment and renewal.”<sup>2</sup>

Herlihy also stated that “each of these attitudes came into prominence during certain periods of medieval history.” For the time around 1000, however, I think that all four sets of attitudes played an important role in human relations with nature in Europe, in juxtaposition to and influencing each other.

In its “wild” and “untamed” form, nature may have been evaluated as space to be cultivated, or a space purposefully left in its “original” appearance. If nature seemed untamable and unreceptive to the direct or indirect influence of human actions, in most cases it remained a negative connotation. Already early medieval literature demonstrates that the distinction between “wild” and “tame” was regularly used for structuring and comprehending nature and environment and, in that

way, also the world in general—dividing it into parts that were good or bad, reprehensible or plausible, dangerous or blameworthy. This frequently happened (to the impediment of today's understanding) in an ambiguous and ambivalent manner depending on contexts: "wild" or "tame" could represent a good model as well as a bad example. Such concepts were not a mere literary fabrication; in many instances they seem to have been a suitable representation of the challenges confronting people in their social and economic reality (Lemeneva 2000; Simmons 1993, 48-121).

### References to nature in literature

Regularly we confront in literature a pattern of wildness and wilderness. Humans regularly fight this wilderness, and bring about its taming and cultivation. One of the most impressive and well-known examples is the Anglo-Saxon poem, *Beowulf*, written in the tenth century or earlier. Here the monster, Grendel, lives in moorland and fen and attacks the mead hall, symbol of human society, constructed by Hrothgar, king of the Danes: "The poem manifests a basic tension between human society and the surrounding wilderness—fen, moor, and sea, and the terrible beings they harbor" (Herlihy 1980, 108).

Another good example of wilderness is provided by the well-known *Life of Burchard*, Bishop of Worms, written by a canon of Worms after the bishop's death in 1025. The bishopric was assigned to Burchard in 1000, and when he paid a first visit:

He came to Worms, which he found in ruins and almost deserted. Indeed, it was most suited not to man's use but to the lairs of beasts and especially wolves, because the flatness of the location and the destruction of the wall offered easy access to wild animals and robbers. Indeed, they say that wolves had often devoured sheep in the city while everyone looked on; and when people wanted to prevent this, the wolves boldly frightened them off with constant attacks and then escaped unharmed, even though all were pursuing them. . . In the end, the people left the city deserted, went outside the wall, and there established the houses and buildings necessary for their uses. They also protected themselves and their possessions against robbers and wild animals with hedges, beams, and other wooden structures. Because of all this, Burchard was greatly saddened upon seeing the abandoned city.<sup>3</sup>

This description, presenting well-known rhetorical elements (Fichtenau 1984, 501), at the same time shows the discourse of nature in its

"untamed" appearance taking over the once civilized city. During his episcopate, Burchard changed this situation: "Indeed, in just five years, he recalled the citizens who had been driven out. . . and properly restored a city that had been utterly abandoned." Burchard had recultivated "untamed" nature, a clear metaphor for his episcopal reforms.

Burchard sometimes wished to retreat from the business of the world, following the well-known late classical and early medieval hermit tradition. Here, one is confronted with a "recreational" attitude to nature. To enable this retreat, the bishop again needed wilderness, but now embodying the beauty and peace of the quasi-untouched wilderness:

There is a pine forest two miles away from Worms, which abounds in silver fir, and a muddy swamp winds around it on one side. In the middle of the swamp stands a beautiful hill to which the man of God commanded that he be transferred; and because he wanted to avoid the tumults of the world, he leveled the hill once the trees and bushes had been cut down. There he first built an oratory, then . . . he constructed a magnificent cell. To this cell he withdraw . . . There, putting all secular business behind him, he worked zealously with all might in the service of God.<sup>4</sup>

In this case, he "cultivated" nature so that it remained a kind of peaceful setting for his own spiritual recreation and relaxation.

"Wild" and "tame" sometimes became matters of prestige. A specific instance can be found in the report of Bishop Liutprand of Cremona, who went on a diplomatic mission for Emperor Otto I to Constantinople in 968. The Byzantine Emperor, Nicephorus, asked the bishop if Emperor Otto had parks, and if he also had wild asses and other animals in those parks. According to Liutprand, "When I had answered him that you had parks and animals in the parks, but no wild asses, he said: 'I will take you into our park and you will be surprised to see its size and to look at the wild asses.'" Wild asses in this context are a clear metaphor in connection with their occurrences in the Bible and Church Fathers, obviously well-known in Byzantium, but not so familiar in the Western Church.<sup>5</sup> Liutprand went on and scoffed:

I was led therefore into a park which was rather large, hilly and fruitful, but not at all pleasing to the view . . . there met us, herded together with goats, the so-called wild asses. But why, I ask, wild asses? Our tame ones at Cremona are the same. Their color, shape and ears are the same; they are equally melodious when they begin to bray; they resemble each other in size, have the same swiftness, and are equally pleasant food for wolves.

When I saw them I said to the Greek who was riding with me: "I never saw the like in Saxony." "If," he said, "your master shall be friendly to the holy emperor, he will give him many such; and it will be no little glory to him himself to possess what no one of his distinguished predecessors has ever seen." . . . My brother and fellow bishop, master Antony [of Brixen], can furnish ones that are not inferior, as is witnessed by the markets which are held at Cremona; and there they walk about not as wild asses but as tame ones. But when my escort had announced the above words to Nicephorus, he sent me two goats, and gave me permission to go away.<sup>6</sup>

Nature, in this instance, and parks as cultivated nature, appear as extraordinary signs of (imperial) power and as a matter of prestige within a cultural landscape of symbolically loaded contrasts. For Liutprand, the Byzantine emperor's park was not "pleasing to the view," and its wild asses were as tame as the ones at the market of Cremona. Here, nature and its role did not work and were not perceived in the intended way – and this was clearly not the fault of nature.<sup>7</sup>

The narrative sources of the period often concentrate on the description and evaluation of exceptional or extraordinary natural phenomena, and on their function as signs, symbols or metaphors for the fate of individuals, specific social groups, or humanity as a whole. Sources emphasize the disastrous, negative influences of the forces of nature, or the miraculous events connected with them. Authors regularly recount episodes of floods, storms, fires, drought, exceptional heat or cold, the appearance of comets, etc., sometimes supplemented with the phrase "such as no man ever remembered before," and often connect them to each other. In particular, recurring famines appear in the chronicles to serve as the typical context for various elemental events (Curschmann 1970, 12-24, 196-219).

Closely connected to this fascination with unusual occurrences is the undisputed connection between the natural and the supernatural (Fichtenau 1984, 416-419). Wonders seem to be signs from heaven, while catastrophies seem to be punishments from God or evidence of his wrath. This connection of nature and religion, embedded in eschatological tradition, is particularly relevant in discussions of earthquakes (Ducellier 1996; Draelants 1996, 194, 197, 204, 215). Sources that refer to the apocalyptic connotations of the year 1000 make intensive use of wonders and prodigies, for nature was one of the spheres that provided humans with signs announcing the Millenium of the Incarnation, the Millenium of the Passion, and the consequences of their appearance (Landes 1996a, 1999a, 1999b). A well-known exam-

ple is the chronicle of the Burgundian monk and chronicler, Rodulfus Glaber, who died around 1044 (Landes 1996b).

The very old and popular belief in weather and storm-makers, with versions traced among the Greeks, Romans, Germans, and Scandinavians, also crops up around 1000. In the *Corrector* (1008-1012), a manual for confessors, Bishop Burchard of Worms urges priests to ask their parishioners if they believe that enchanterers could provoke storms through demonic incantations (Dutton 1995, 116; Vogel 1974). Church authorities still had to present such "pagan" beliefs on human abilities to control the weather as delusion and superstition.

Even when we confront "objective" descriptions that concentrate on positive confrontations with nature, as in literary portrayals or treatments of rural management and labor, we must see them as didactic idealizations. This, for instance, might be generally acknowledged for a number of literary portrayals of nature or treatments of rural management and work. Read, for example, the well-known English "Dialogue Between Master and Disciple: On Laborers," written about 1000:

- Master: What sayest thou plowman? How do you do your work?  
 Plowman: O my lord, I work very hard: I go out at dawn, driving the cattle to the field, and I yoke them to the plow. Nor is the weather so bad in winter that I dare to stay at home, for fear of my lord: but when the oxen are yoked, and the plowshare and coulter attached to the plow, I must plow one whole field a day, or more. . .  
 Master: What have you to say shepherd? Have you heavy work too?  
 Shepherd: I have indeed. In the grey dawn I drive my sheep to the pasture and I stand watch over them, in heat and cold, with my dogs, lest the wolves devour them. And I bring them back to the fold and milk them twice a day. And I move their fold; and I make cheese and butter, and I am faithful to my lord.<sup>8</sup>

## Conclusion

The examples I have presented from written source material clearly show that nature, its perception, comprehension, and utilization were not simply a matter of economic resources, cultivation, or colonization. Influences came from religion, social conditions, mentality, prestige, imagination, and connotations. European observers laid particular emphasis on contrasts. Creation embedded within contexts creating

meaning. European nature – good or bad, dangerous or helpful, wild or tame, “real” or miraculous – did not exist as a neutral state. It had become a moralizing factor (Heiland 1992, 26).

An increase in population around 1000 (Gruppe 1986, 26), particularly in Western Europe and parts of North and Central Europe, initiated more organized clearing activities and inland colonization, as “people tried to win the upper hand over perils by intervening in nature” (Goetz 1993, 18). The general expansion of the three-field rotational system also has to be seen in connection with this development. Amid these expanded and intensive activities, it seems clear that nature and the environment played, and had to play, a significant role in any kind of argument, discourse, or narrative that dealt with life and life-circumstances. Nature was regularly taken as a means to compare and to explain, to connote and to evaluate political, administrative, religious, social, or economic matters. Generally, such a phenomenon is not really specific to the time around 1000, but can be found in a European tradition that developed from Late Antiquity, and was still to be found in the later Middle Ages. However, it has to be stressed that in the Europe of around 1000 nature in context had become one of the main instruments through which any kind of important event, action or situation could be explained, elucidated, and analyzed comparatively. The perception, comprehension, and utilization of nature regularly functioned in a number of different, but nevertheless connected, context-bound, type- and pattern-dependent respects—even for individuals and social groups to whom the calendar year 1000 did not mean anything special.

## Notes

1. See, for instance, the surviving written information concerning meteorological phenomena, mainly taken out of narrative sources, in Alexandre 1987, 336-339.

2. See also Barros (1998), who describes attitudes of “wondrous” (*wunderbare*), “dominated” (*beherrschte*), “dangerous” (*feindliche*) and “befriended” (*befreundete*) nature.

3. “The Life of Burchard Bishop of Worms, 1025.” *Internet Medieval Sourcebook* (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1025burchard-vita.html>), accessed July 2002.

4. North 1841, chapter 10. See also the positively connoted literary descriptions of nature in Ganzenmüller 1914, 120-163.

5. See Psalm 104, 11; Job 6, 5; 24, 5; 39, 5; Jeremiah 2, 24; 14, 6.

6. "Liutprand of Cremona: Report of his Mission to Constantinople." *Internet Medieval Sourcebook* (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/liudprandl.html>), accessed July 2002. The text is modernized slightly by the changing of archaic verb forms and by the Americanization of the spelling. See also Koder and Weber 1980.

7. The embassy was not successful for these western ignoramuses, however, because of political reasons and resentments between the Holy Roman Empire, its diplomatic representative Liutprand, and the Byzantine Emperor.

8. "The Dialogue between Master & Disciple: On Laborers, c. 1000." *Internet Medieval Sourcebook* (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1000workers.html>), accessed July 2002.

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## **Chapter 3**

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### **The Use of Natural Resources in the Islamic World**

#### **Heinz Grotzfeld**

The legitimation of man to exploit nature has not been questioned in Western civilization until quite recently. Man used to regard himself as called to rule over nature: "And God said unto them, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth'" (Genesis 1, 28). The call of modern ecological and environmental movements for careful use of natural resources and respect for the environment would have been strange for Europe around the year 1000. All the more for the Islamic world, which continued, perhaps more strictly than Europe, the ancient Near Eastern civilization where this instrumental attitude toward nature and the environment had come into being. Even in its practice of exploiting the resources of nature, Islamic civilization is largely a direct continuation of earlier civilizations.

The achievements of the Islamic World expanded upon the knowledge, technology and experience of the Hellenistic-Mediterranean, Iranian and Indian civilizations. After the Islamic conquest, however, the areas of these three civilizations which had been more or less separated from one other gradually became integrated into one homogeneous empire. Despite the vicissitudes of dynastic and political affairs, the empire remained without interior borders, and the entire Islamic world experienced common cultural, legal, social and economic developments. Knowledge and experience from the three civilization areas could flow freely and spread, an openness that initiated new developments. Accumulation of knowledge and practical skills made possible that high level of agricultural and industrial production and that high degree of exploitation of natural resources reached by most of the Islamic countries during the ninth and tenth centuries.

During the first decades after the Islamic conquest, which began in 635, the new Arab rulers did not change much of the structures of the subjugated countries. The actual ownership of agricultural land remained untouched by the conquest, so a continued interest of the owners in the maintenance of the soil and irrigation installations can be taken for granted. Settling of Arabian Muslims was allowed only on state-owned land, e.g. the crown-land in the former Sassanian parts of the new empire. "Beduinization" of agricultural land, which occurred frequently in later centuries, was not tolerated by the Umayyads. Even the early administrative, fiscal and economic reforms carried out around 700 under Caliph Abd al-Malik (685-705) and his viceroy in Iraq, al-Hajjāj, involved only minor changes in these structures. In their long-term effect, however, they turned out to be a great jump toward the integration of the conquered countries into one Islamic empire.

The situation of the first two Islamic centuries, with their expansion wars and their foundation of new cities, together with the freedom of movement even for the rural population,<sup>1</sup> resulted in a high demographic mobility. Population moved from the countryside into urban centers, and from smaller urban sub-centers into the metropolises, while horizontal mobility allowed relocation from one rural or urban area to another. The dimensions of this mobility are manifested in the quick growth of the cities founded in the first Muslim centuries, and by the names of innumerable individuals mentioned in biographical dictionaries or chronicles. Names found abundantly in the *Tārīkh Baghdād* (e.g. Marwazi, Rāzi, Tūsi, Harawī, Basri, Wāsi, Mawsili, Dāraqutni, etc.) indicate that they or their ancestors originated

in faraway Marw (in today's Turkestan), Rayy (some miles south of Teheran), Tûs (today's Mashhad in northeastern Iran), Herât (western Afghanistan), the less remote Basra, Wâsit, Mossul, or the nearby village Dâr al-qutn. As a result of demographic mobility, know-how from even the most remote parts of the Islamic world accumulated at many points, especially in urban centers. Arabic, generally accepted as the common means of oral and written communication, promoted the transmission and exchange of ideas and initiated a unique dynamic. It may be daring to compare the integration of the Islamic world with that of the modern European Community, but there are some parallels which justify such a comparison: the free flow of goods and know-how, the freedom of movement for people, the more or less uniform conditions in a homogenous economic zone, the convergence of people's needs. The process itself remains largely unknown to us, but we are able to observe, though very often at disconnected points, the impressive results achieved by the year 1000.

This paper deals chiefly with the achievements of the Islamic world in meeting the basic needs of man: food, clothing and shelter. The agricultural sector and the measures intended to increase agrarian production as well as parts of the technological sector, e.g. irrigation devices, will be the focus. The kind of sources at our disposal necessitate working backward from the rich first-hand accounts of later periods (twelfth-fifteenth centuries) and joining them to the scattered references available for the decades around the turn of the millennium.

### **Expanding the food supply: Irrigation technology**

As a continuation of Near Eastern, Hellenistic and Roman civilizations, the Islamic world was structured after the model of the city (*polis* or *civitas*, Arabic *madîna*). Medieval Islamic theorists considered the *madîna*, together with its countryside, as the minimal form of a perfect society, the smallest possible organizational form enabling cooperation to satisfy the needs of all people. The function of the countryside was to produce food and other raw materials (e.g. spinning fibers such as wool, cotton, silk; dying materials such as indigo; oil for lamps; wax). Processing was chiefly an urban function.

Around the end of the tenth century, in all probability far more than half of the people of the Islamic world were still living in the countryside, employed in the agrarian sector either directly or supporting agriculture indirectly, e.g. in the construction or maintenance of irrigation installations. At the same time, the number

of people living in towns must have been considerable, because towns founded during the expansion wars (Kufa, Fustat or Shiraz) or the later-founded cities Baghdad and Cairo) increased constantly.<sup>2</sup> We must assume that the total population of the Islamic world had risen between the eighth and eleventh centuries. From the sources, we can infer that demographic growth correlated with an expansion of agrarian output, achieved by what Andrew M. Watson (1974, 1983) calls "agricultural innovation." New techniques and practices consisted partly in the strictly quantitative processes of reclaiming land that had fallen barren or draining swamps and marshes, but chiefly consisted of the application of qualitative measures such as new or improved farming practices – opening a new agricultural season by introducing summer crops or introducing an improved irrigation technology – which allowed the expansion of the arable area.

Many of the countries forming the Islamic world around the year 1000 were situated in the transition zone ranging from a temperate, sufficiently humid climate to semiarid and arid (temperate or warm) climates. Availability of water was the main factor limiting the expansion of the arable area. Most of these countries register high rates of precipitation during the winter, whereas hardly any rain falls during the summer. Cultivators had addressed these limitations for millennia by cultivating appropriate crops such as wheat or barley, which need water when growing but no longer require it when ripening, and by creating cisterns and reservoirs for storing or keeping back the surplus of winter precipitation. Areas with high winter precipitation commonly enjoy perennial sources through natural water reservoirs underground and snow which is to be found in the higher parts of the mountains until early summer. During the dry part of the year, the output from these sources does decrease, but systems for careful preservation of water resources do allow the prolongation by several months of the season for irrigation of cultivated land.

An instructive example for the use and distribution of perennial water in a semi-arid area is furnished by the irrigation system of the *Ghûta*, the oasis of Damascus, which is watered by several brooks descending from Anti-Libanus, the most important being the Nahr Barada (Tresse 1929). At different points a few kilometres before the gorge of Rabwe, at the outlet of which the Barada enters into the plain of Damascus, considerable parts of its water are diverted into side- canals and conducted in a gentle gradient (0.1-0.15 percent, versus ca. 0.5 percent of the Barada itself) through the gorge, partly in conduits cut into the rocks forming its side-walls, and then further along the slopes of the mountain dominating the town. From these canals, which eventually

run at levels 10-36 meters above the river-bed of the Barada, water is distributed by a sophisticated system into conduits irrigating a large area covered by orchards and fields. In the past the water drove a number of mills and supplied a great number of hamlets and villages with drinking water. Some of these canals (at least the Nahr Tôra and Nahr Bânyâs) must have existed already in the first millennium BCE.<sup>3</sup> Local tradition claims that the Nahr Yazîd, the highest situated canal, was built under the Umayyad Caliph Yazîd I (ruled 679-683), but most likely he ordered only an amendment or prolongation of an existing canal, since irrigation installations which had fallen in decay in the first half of the seventh century successively became refurbished once the new Arab regime guaranteed security.<sup>4</sup>

Similar, though mostly smaller, canal systems using the water of perennial sources for irrigation exist in many places in the mountains of Lebanon, Syria, and Anatolia. It seems that they were common in Muslim Spain, for the Umayyad rulers exerted some efforts for creating a new *Ghûta* there. There is a report on the construction of a canal which in its dimensions may be compared with Nahr Tôra or Nahr Yazîd (Maqqari 1949, 2: 100-101). This canal conducting water from the mountain near Cordoba to the Qasr an-nâ'ûra west of the town, built by order of Abdarrahmân III (912-961), the Umayyad ruler of Andalus, chiefly for the supply of his palace-town az-Zahrâ' and the irrigation of its orchards and gardens. The importance of the building project is illustrated best by the fact that the crown-prince himself had been entrusted with the supervision. At the end of 941, the canal was completed after a space of only 14 months, which suggests a high level of planning and technical skill.

In other countries, aquifers have been exploited in a different way: before the water comes to the surface, it is tapped in subterranean conduits and conducted, sometimes over long distances, to the point of destination. This is the case for the Persian *qanât* systems, which spread over the northeastern parts of the Islamic world and into the western parts of North Africa from the ninth until the eleventh century (Wulff 1966, 249-254; Hasan and Hill 1986, 84-86).

At several points where the topographical conditions were suitable, relatively high dams had been raised already in antiquity, e.g. the dam of dressed blocks of stone built across the river Orontes near Homs in Syria, forming the lake of Homs with a surface area of eight by four kilometers. This dam, which is seven meters high and more than two kilometers long, retains water for the dry season and raises its level, allowing irrigation of a wide area. A similar construction, although of smaller scale, is the still existing Band-i-'amîr or Band-i-'Aduî across

the river Kur in the Persian province of Fârs. This dam, built around the year 960 by the Buyid emir 'Abudaddawla at the place of an older, ruined dam constructed during Achaemenid times (sixth-fourth centuries BCE), allowed diversion of water into a ramified system of canals<sup>5</sup> for the irrigation of an area including 300 estates, according to Muqaddasi (1906, 444). Historical sources from the time after 1000 say that this area produced a highly appreciated variety of rice. There is, however, a note from the fiscal year 389 H (999 CE) relating an arrangement made between the treasury and the heirs of the head of the Alids, Muhammad Ibn 'Umar. This note specifies only wheat and barley among the 2,200 *kurr* (1,320 tons) payed in kind along with 19,000 *dīnār* in cash to settle the taxes for their estates in Fârs; rice may not yet have been a common crop in that province.

In places where the terrain or other circumstances did not allow the construction of a weir or dam, the water had to be lifted up to the level of the land by special devices. The Islamic world made use of miscellaneous forms. The simplest, operated by human effort, consisted of pails pulled by a rope passing through a pulley or lifted by means of a cross beam turning on poles and balanced by a counterweight at the other end. More effective were large leather bags pulled by ropes passing through pulleys suspended on a scaffold built either above a well or at the edge of a steep river bank, operated with the help of draft animals (Wulff 1966, 256 and figures 340-342). Since both forms could be installed easily and quickly, they were appropriate even for ephemeral use by Beduins settling temporarily near a river and cultivating abandoned land. In order to lift water from rivers, canals and wells, sedentary people usually made use of simple machines operated with the help of draft animals. These machines feature two wheels, the movement of the horizontal one driven by the animal being transmitted by a toothed gear onto the other wheel, generating the vertical power needed for the lifting operation.

The most effective lifting device was the *noria* (*nâ'ûra*, pl. *nawâ'ir* or *dûlâb*, pl. *dawâlib*), a great wheel lifting the water of a river in a series of revolving boxes or pots fixed at the rim. This machine is driven by the current of the river and thus works continuously, capable of lifting water 15 or more meters, according to the size of the wheel; the diameter of the great *noria* on the Orontes near Hama, built in the thirteenth century, is about 20 meters. *Norias* required aqueducts in order to move the lifted water into the irrigation network. Usually, these aqueducts were built a little bit into the riverbed (in the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, very often in pairs on either side of the river), thus strengthening and accelerating the current.

Most irrigation installations secured the supply of water for a wide area and for the land of many owners. They presupposed social rules and governmental statutes that regulated the construction and maintenance of the irrigation installations as well as the rights and duties of the beneficiaries. A water office (*diwân al-mâ'*) seems to have been responsible for these matters,<sup>6</sup> but how this office was organized around 1000 and how it was working in detail have not been investigated.

By the end of the tenth century, the knowledge about irrigation methods and technology had spread all over the Islamic world. Water wheels in Baghdad were called with their Persian name (*dûlâb*), and Persian-style conduits (*qanât*) were to be found even in Muslim Spain and the mountainous regions of what are now Morocco and Algeria (Watson 1983, 110, Map 8). This technology supported the widespread cultivation of crops such as sugar cane or rice that required heavy watering.

### Changing rhythms of the agricultural year

During the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries, traditional forms of agriculture gave way in many places to a more intensive exploitation of the land. Where from ancient times the land had lain fallow during the summer, improved irrigation opened a new agricultural season. Texts from this period (Ibn Wahshiya 1993, 522) now and then mention two harvests per year, or even five sowings and harvests during the space of two years. This does not mean that one and the same piece of land was sown and reaped as often as that. In many parts of the Islamic world, wheat and barley, the traditional winter crops, do not ripen before the sowing of most summer crops. Most likely, the situation did not differ much from that observed in the nineteenth century, when summer crops were grown occasionally in rotation with winter crops, with some overlap in the cropping schedule on contiguous lands. An indication of crop rotation procedures may be seen in Ibn Wahshiya's advice (1993, 524) to avoid growing sesame, a summer crop, on the same land two years in a row, because this would exhaust the soil. His advice indicates, at the same time, that a regular rotation was not usual in his time.

As the exploitation of cultivated land became far more intensive, manuring became a necessity. Ibn Wahshiya presents a series of recipes for preparing manure. Very often the straw or the ashes of the crops were one of the ingredients, so that minerals taken in by these



plants were fed back to the soil. Other common ingredients were dung, night soil and blood (the blood running out from slaughtered animals is not permitted as an ingredient of food in Islam); the manure, thus, certainly had high concentrations of nitrogen. All mixtures were matured for a certain time in special pits. It is noteworthy that manuring is recommended above all for the new crops that had been introduced into the Near Eastern countries just before or after the Islamic conquest, such as rice, bananas and sugar cane. The Islamic ecumene thus allowed the spread of agricultural knowledge together with the spread of these crops.

Some precious information about the new crops towards the end of the tenth century appears in the book *Ahsan at-taqâsim fî ma'rifat al-'aqâlim* of the Arabian geographer Muqaddasi, written around 990.

- Rice is mentioned there among the export goods of many regions of the Islamic world, even of the Bilâd ash-Shâm (today's Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine), where rice was grown in the district of Baysân southwest of the Lake of Tiberias (Muqaddasi 1906, 180). Ibn Wahshiya (1993, 478 ff.) also described the cultivation of rice in detail. He knew about several methods of sowing: one procedure mixed the grains with earth compost to create balls resembling small meatballs (*kabâb*) that were put into holes of the seed-bed (*mashar*); another procedure entailed the scattering (*nathr*) of grains over the surface of the watered seed-bed and subsequent thinning and transplanting of the seedlings.
- Hard wheat, believed to be an introduction from Ethiopia sometime between 800 and 1100, became the most important grain in the Islamic world. Contemporary Arabic texts do not distinguish hard wheat from the various other species of *triticum* which were still under cultivation. Ibn Wahshiya (1993, 454, 460), an author of the late tenth century, distinguishes between a "red species of wheat" (*al-hamrâ' min al-hinta*) and a "not red one" (*ghayr al-hamrâ'*). He also contrasts a "tightly packed, compact wheat" (*al-hinta al-mutalazziza ar-razîna*) with a "loose, slack wheat" (*al-hinta ar-rakhwa*); at least in the case of the red variety<sup>7</sup> may we interpret it as hard wheat.
- The banana had been grown in Palestine already before the year 1000. Both recension B and C of Muqaddasi (1906, 180-81) mention it among the products of the country without any comment, but only recension C among the major export goods. The wording suggests that the fruit was not yet commonly known: "the banana (*mawz*) . . . is something of the size of a cucumber, the skin of which can be peeled off easily, as delicate as a *battîkh*,<sup>8</sup> but more tasty."

Watson (1983, 90) raises the question of the agents who propagated the new agricultural methods and introduced the new crops. He enumerates some examples where rulers played an important role in the diffusion of crops, but finally he gives most credit to the “thousands of mostly unknown individuals from many levels of society.” For the late tenth century, the impetus may be due to the rulers, but implementation was a grass-roots phenomenon. The Buyid ruler 'Adudaddawla introduced the cultivation of indigo in the Persian provinces of Fârs and Kirman (Ibn al-Jawzi 1938, 7: 114; 11), but according to Ibn Wahshiya (1993, 194, 202) it was estate managers, land owners or their agents who had to serve as examples and teachers for the rural population ('akara).

Agricultural innovations and the expansion of cultivated land into ecologically sensitive areas were not free of risk. Only optimal conditions made it possible to maintain the level of production required to supply the increasing population. Agricultural production diminished severely and food prices sometimes rose to exorbitant heights as a result of unfavorable weather, pests, and plant diseases, combined with human factors such as warlike incidents, epidemics or simple mismanagement. The numerous reports of a rise in prices for food in the tenth and eleventh centuries indicate clearly that agricultural expansion was reaching its limits.<sup>9</sup>

## Clothing

Islamic law prescribes a certain degree of bodily covering, but disapproves of costly and luxurious garments. In practice, however, the numerous *hadîths* that condemn the use of silk or similar precious textiles, especially for men's wear, suggest that at least urban society attached great importance to dress. The importance of the textile industry in Islamic towns is reflected by the frequency of references to textile neighborhoods (*souks*) for cotton, silk, and woolen textiles in chronicles or even popular stories, and by the surnames (*laqab*) of many persons mentioned in the texts, such as *al-Bazzâz*, *al-Harîri* (silk trader) or *al-Qalânisi* (manufacturer of a large headgear or hood which is called *qalansuwa*).

Textile products were intended not only for the domestic market, but also for export to countries outside the Islamic world (shown by European terms such as *muslin*). The raw materials – wool, cotton and silk – were home grown; the dyes, particularly indigo, were produced in several regions of the Islamic world. Monocultures such as cotton

in nineteenth-century Egypt were unknown. The best earnings were not made by the sale of the raw materials, but by the sale of the finished products. The profits of this sector provoked repeated attempts to tax finished textiles. In the year 999, for example, a tithe (*'ushr*) on all silk and cotton fabrics woven in Baghdad was proclaimed, provoking riots in the weavers' quarters of Bâb ash-Shâm and al-'Attâbiyyîn. This time, in contrast to earlier attempts when decrees finally had to be revoked, the authorities succeeded in imposing the tax at least on silk fabrics (Sabi 1919, 336).

An interesting feature of our sources is the description of markets for second-hand clothes and textiles (called in some places *sûq al-khila'*), where items ranged from robes of honor bestowed once by a prince or the caliph himself, to second hand shrouds which grave robbers tried to turn into cash. It is unlikely that this trade, well documented for the tenth century, reflects an environmental awareness; it was due rather to the desire for careful management of personal resources.

## Shelter

The most common building material available in most parts of the Islamic world is stone, generally built into walls with lime mortar. In alluvial zones where stone is not available, the material at hand is sun-dried mud bricks (*labin*). Burnt bricks (*'âjurr*) were mainly used for more important buildings and for architectural or engineering works that had to bear considerable strain, such as the covers of balustrades or the panels of canals. It seems that in the ninth and tenth centuries, even the walls of palaces in Baghdad, including the palace of Sebüktegîn, were built mainly of mud bricks; if the walls of these buildings had been built with burnt bricks and mortar, it would not have been possible for 'Adudaddawla to pull them down with elephants in about 980 (Ibn al-Jawzi 1938, 7: 76-79). Recycling of architectural components – doors, doorframes, beams, burnt bricks, tiles, pillars, and capitals from Hellenistic, Roman or Sassanian ruins – was a common practice.

## Water and wind power

Water power mainly served for driving flour mills situated either on watercourses or on boats (floating mills). Technological treatises from the tenth century furnish descriptions and drawings of three types of wheels: the horizontal-axle undershot or, less frequently, the overshot

vaned wheel (Vitruvian mill); the vertical-axe paddle wheel (Norse mill); and the scoop-wheel (it is not quite clear whether this type differed from an undershot vaned wheel). The type of vertical-axe windmills described in these sources, common until the twentieth century in Sijistân/Sîstân, look quite different from European windmills; they are rather comparable with giant revolving doors, built in natural or artificial wind tunnels. All these machines served to raise water to higher levels, to husk rice, and possibly even to process sugar cane. There are also indications that water-driven trip hammers for crushing ores were already established in the tenth century (Hasan and Hill 1986, 242-44). In some places there were large-scale plants including a great number of mills running in parallel, though independent from one another. The "mill of the Patrikios" (*rahâ al-bitriq*) in Baghdad, installed at the initiative of a Byzantine envoy (*patrikios*), is said to have utilized 100 separate mills, perhaps an atypical example of technology transfer from Europe to the Islamic world. Windmills, too, in some places were arranged in long rows (Wulff 1966, 289, fig. 406).

### The control of floods and human confidence

Flood control was most important for the two greatest river systems of the Islamic world, the Tigris/Euphrates and the Nile. The dikes along the rivers and canals in Lower Mesopotamia mainly served to protect cultivated land from being inundated by the floods of the Tigris and its tributaries. Floods were common in the spring, when heavy rains caused sudden thaws in the Eastern Taurus and Zagros Mountains. In the tenth century, floods of the Tigris repeatedly breached dikes and damaged irrigation canals and installations in many places, so that wide areas remained uncultivated. The Buyid rulers, primarily 'Adudaddawla, took special care to repair dikes and irrigation installations, secure the dikes during floods, deepen silted canals, and settle semi-nomadic Arabs on deserted lands.

The dikes along the Nile in Egypt served other purposes: by delaying the annual overflow of the river, they allowed additional flood waters to reach more distant areas with levels half a cubit higher than the land close to the Nile. In later phases of the flood-season, after the opening of the canals branching off the Nile and the flooding of the farmland, areas enclosed by dikes kept back the flood so that suspended matter could settle and fertilize the earth.

From the experience gained by constructing dikes and dams arose, so

it seems, a mentality of self-confidence: man thought himself capable of keeping nature under control. An expression of this mentality may be seen in the ideas of the physicist Ibn al-Haytham (965-1034) on the extensive regulation of the Nile, and even more in the confidence of the Fatimid Caliph Al-Hâkim (reigned 996-1021) that such an undertaking was feasible. Living in Basra, Ibn al-Haytham claimed that he could regulate the flow of the Nile in such a way that it would yield profits both in the low water season and in the flood season. Al-Hâkim, hearing about these ambitious plans, invited the scientist to Egypt and equipped him with a staff of engineers and workers. But after inspecting the river up to the first cataract south of Aswan, Ibn al-Haytham realized the impossibility of his task. His biographers say that he understood why the architects of the pyramids, in spite of their undeniable ability, had refrained from regulating the Nile, a task as urgent for their time as for his own. In spite of his fear of al-Hâkim's anger, he abandoned his plans, thus demonstrating that it is not shameful for man to become aware of his limits.

## Notes

1. This holds true for the eastern parts of the Empire. In Egypt, in order to prevent or to minimize the rural exodus, peasants were not allowed to leave their villages.

2. There is no indication that the number of inhabitants of other towns had decreased considerably or that towns had become totally desolate (the decline of Ktesiphon/Madâ'in is an exception, the desolation of Samarra is due to special circumstances).

3. In the Bible, 2 Kings (5,12) mentions "*Abana* (or *Amana*) and *Parpar*, the rivers of Damascus (*naharôt Dammäsâq*)."

4. This is what is suggested by the information recorded by the Damascene historian Ibn 'Asâkir (d. 1176) (Eliséeff 1959, 249-57).

5. See aerial photography in Wulff 1966, 247, figures 331 and 332.

6. Khwârizmi's *Mafâtih al-'ulûm* (which is a list of technical terms, partly explained by scanty definitions, partly without any definition) enumerates a series of terms which were of importance in this office; most of them are names of devices lifting water (Khuwarizmi 1978, ch. 4, para. 7).

7. Red (*hamrâ'*) covers a wide range between red and reddish brown, the colours of the grain of *triticum durum*. The different Arabic names of wheat (*hintâ*, *qamh* and *burr*) do not mean different species or varieties, but are synonyms distributed regionally.

8. In Palestine *batîkh* means today the watermelon, while in other regions such as northern Syria the word means the honey melon.

9. See the long list of famines covering the period 946-1060 given by Busse 1969, 386-92.

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## **Chapter 4**

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### **Natural Resources and Human Settlements: Perceiving the Environment in India**

**Ranabir Chakravarti**

#### **Empire, kingdom, and agrarian expansion**

In the study of the past of India (here in the sense of the entire subcontinent), the advent of the year 1000 or, more broadly speaking, the beginning of the eleventh century, speaks of the emergence of several significant trends and some events of political importance. Most text books of Indian history link the advent of the new millennium with the activities of the Ghaznavid ruler Mahmud, who raided northern and western India as many as eighteen times from 997 to 1025-26. Conventional historiography often perceives these raids as signs of the eclipse of ancient India and the advent of the medieval—a period of decline in Indian history.<sup>1</sup>

The raids, militarily devastating for many north Indian powers, did not result in any annexation of territories by Mahmud. They did contribute to the collapse of the mighty regional power of the Pratiharas of Kanyakubja (Kanauj) by the first quarter of the eleventh century, although their arch-rivals in eastern India, the Palas of Bihar and Bengal, continued to reign until 1175. The collapse of the Pratihara power coincided with the rise to prominence of two central Indian powers: the Chandellas of Jejakabhukti (around Khajuraho in modern Madhya Pradesh) and the Kalachuris of Dahala (in Madhya Pradesh). Meanwhile, in peninsular India, the Rashtrakuta dynasty of Manyakheta, the most formidable power in the Deccan, was overthrown by their erstwhile feudatories, the Western Chalukyas (974). The rise of this new power in the Deccan resulted in protracted conflict throughout the whole of the eleventh century with the Chola dynasty based in Tamil Nadu. The Cholas under Rajaraja I (985-1014) and his son Rajendra I (1012-1044) launched spectacular conquests in the Deccan and overran South India. Exactly when North India was facing the invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni, the Cholas were launching maritime expeditions to Sri Lanka (from 993 onwards), the Maldives in the Indian Ocean, and twelve areas in Southeast Asia (in 1025). These maritime campaigns are unique in Indian history. The Chola king Rajendra is also known for a daring campaign in 1024 all the way from the "Circle of the Cholas" (Cholamandalam) in the Kaveri River delta to Vangala in the Ganga River delta (Nilakantha Sastri 1955).

Because the traditional Indian concept of time measured four immensely long *yugas* or ages (*satya* or *krita*, *treta*, *dvapara* and *kali*) and rested on a vision of cyclical time, it differed from the notion of time's arrow pointing from past to present to future—a concept that speaks of changing condition and the progress of civilization. Early Indians, conceptually embedded in long cycles, have often been accused of a lack of temporal sense or care for chronology. It must, however, be pointed out that Indian political elites from the third century BCE onwards were aware of the importance of chronicling events by referring to regnal years and eras or seasons, months, fortnights, weeks, days, etc. Available data, mainly epigraphic, cannot substantiate the lack of a calendrical sensibility (Thapar 1996, 2000). Indian writers around the year 1000 did not perceive the political events and developments of their times as a markers of a new age in Indian history. In terms of the two traditional calendars in India, namely the Vikrama era (beginning 57 BCE) and the Saka era (beginning 78 CE), the year 1000 would correspond to Vikrama era 1057 and Saka era 922.



In other words, there is no indication that Indians viewed the beginning of 1000 as a special year marking the beginning of a new millennium.

The situation in the year 1000 demands our attention because of developments in political, socio-economic, and environmental history which were, however, not as spectacular as the imperial wars and campaigns mentioned above.

An unmistakable feature of the political situation in India around 1000 is the presence of a large number of monarchical powers at regional and local levels and the absence of a paramount political power. Regional kingdoms had evolved not merely in the well-known poles of attraction like the Ganga River basin and the valleys of the Krishna and Godavari Rivers in the Deccan, but also in many peripheral and fringe zones. Monarchical state polities grew in areas hitherto not experiencing such a system. For example, the region of Kamarupa in the Brahmaputra River valley figures as a frontier (*pratyanta*) area in relation to the most formidable power in North India in the fourth century, but from the seventh century onwards it was rising on the political scene of northeastern India. In the far north, Kashmir had never been prominent prior to eighth century, when it became a formidable kingdom. The arid region of Rajasthan, too, witnessed the emergence of a few local and regional monarchical powers after ninth century. In the beginning of the sixth century the Dahala area had been known for its eighteen forest chieftains (*ashtadasatavirajyabhyantara dabhalarajyantargata*); by the ninth century there existed in the same region the house of the Kalachuris with their seat of power at Tripuri.

The penetration of royal agents into regions previously without the experience of a territorial state became possible with the generation of adequate resources — essentially agricultural — but for which the monarchical polity would not have been sustainable. In other words, the proliferation of monarchical powers has to be associated with the expansion of agricultural and sedentary settlements in areas not regularly cultivated and settled before. The period from ca. 500 to 1300 saw numerous instances of the expansion of agriculture, marked by the issuance of copper plate charters under royal orders, mostly confirming revenue-free land grants. The beneficiaries were individual or collective religious specialists (*brahmadeya*, *agrahara*) or religious establishments dedicated to a god (*devadana*)—ranging from a shrine to a brahmanical monastic complex (*matha*), a Buddhist monastery (*vihara*), or a Jaina establishment. Institutional grants, distinct from grants to an individual or group of brahmanas, often created estates in what may be termed “tribal areas” previously characterized by stateless

societies. This process certainly paved the way for the growth of agrarian zones, the spread of a caste (*jati-varna*) system and the absorption of many tribal deities into devotional (*bhakti*) cults.<sup>2</sup> It is in the context of this complex process of the spread of agrarian settlements and monarchical polity that we may understand the natural resources and human settlements in the subcontinent in and around 1000.

This chapter is based on gleanings from epigraphic and literary (normative, creative and technical) evidence that offers only impressions and rarely any statistical data. My presentation offers some case studies, but does not furnish a black-box narration of events applicable throughout the subcontinent. The paucity of data on natural resources and human settlements in India does not allow us to pinpoint any example exactly on the year 1000. Therefore, the present study will embrace the period preceding and succeeding the millennium.

### The monsoon scenario

The profusion and diversity of agricultural crops in India indicates an awareness among Indian writers from remote antiquity about climate and its interaction with soil and water. They accorded importance to the variations in rainfall patterns in different regions of the vast subcontinent, where the success or failure of agriculture is largely dependent on the distribution of rains borne on the monsoon winds—the massive southwest monsoon from June to September and the northeast monsoon affecting peninsular India from October to February. Though the traditional Indian scheme divides the year into six seasons, each consisting of two months (possibly attempting an impression of symmetry), an alternative system divides the twelve months into three dominant seasons, each spanning four months: summer (*grishma*), the rainy season (*varsha*) and winter (*hemanta/sita*). This threefold scheme clearly highlights the importance of the heavy rains of the southwest monsoon. These rains, however, are unevenly distributed and uncertain, and can enhance or doom agrarian production. This uncertainty of the monsoon rains paves the way for the insistence on irrigation systems that could provide support to the cultivator, especially during lean seasons. The storage and distribution of water is a precondition everywhere for the growth and spread of sedentary agricultural settlements (Spate and Learmonth 1967).

The monsoon winds have long engaged the attention of geographers and climatologists, and they captured the attention of early writers too.

As early as the fourth-third century BCE the Greek envoy to the Maurya court, Megasthenes, noted in his *Indika* (now lost and known only from quotations, excerpts and summaries by later classical authors) that the agrarian prosperity of India was largely due to two rainy seasons, facilitating a double crop (Majumdar 1960). The eleventh-century author of medical treatises, Chakrapanidatta, was not only aware of the monsoon, but presented a two-fold classification of the southwest monsoon including the outburst of rain (*pravrish*) and the season of profuse rainfall (*varsha*), an understanding rooted in the southern part of the Ganga basin (Zimmermann 1987).<sup>3</sup>

The historian is particularly indebted to the studies of earth scientists for unraveling long-term monsoon history. The wind system of the monsoon affects not only the climate of the Indian subcontinent, but also that of northeast Africa and the coast of east Africa (Fein and Stephens 1987; Diaz and Markgraf 1992). In other words, the pattern of precipitation in South Asia does not need to be studied in isolation, but should be linked up with the situation in eastern Africa. In fact, the monsoon fluctuations over Africa and South Asia show striking affinities in decadal fluctuations and in the onsets of droughts (Kutzbach 1987, Quinn 1992). While the variability of the rainfall patterns in the Indian context is available only from the 1840s onwards (thanks to the pioneering efforts of Gilbert Walker in the preparation of rain gauge records), historical evidence on the annual rhythm of the monsoon from remote antiquity exists for the Nile River system. Umar Tusun, in his meticulous study (1925) of Nile River flood data, pushed back the evidence to 622 CE, when the highest and the lowest levels of the Nile flood were measured annually with the help of a gauge, called Nilometer, located at Roda Islands near Cairo. Walker, noting the "tolerably close correspondence between the abundance of the Nile floods and that of the monsoon rains of northwestern India," used the Nile River flood data between 622 and 1925 to infer the historical variability of the Indian monsoons. As a result, the Imperial Gazetteer of India (vol. 1) stated that "it is now fully established that years of drought in western or northwestern India are almost invariably years of low Nile flood. The relation is further confirmed by the fact that years of heavier rain than usual in western India are also years of high Nile flood" (Quinn 1992: 125).<sup>4</sup>

Tusun's presentation of the Nile flood data from 622 to 1522 offers important insights into the rainfall pattern in Indian subcontinent. The period that elapsed between 622 and 999 witnessed 105 years (27.8 percent) of weak Nile flood, implying a corresponding low rainfall in the Indian subcontinent and a cool period in Western Europe. In the

rainfall computations from 1000 to 1290, only 23 years (8 percent) of low Nile flood are recorded, but during the subsequent period between 1291 and 1522, low Nile floods occurred in 50 years (21.6 percent). The least percentage of weak Nile floods, therefore, is seen in the first three centuries of the second millennium.<sup>5</sup> The possible years of low monsoon rains in the subcontinent during the eleventh century, according to the table prepared by Quinn (1992: 140-141), were 1007, 1008, 1023, 1036, 1037, 1057, 1066, 1072, 1085 and 1096. One may cogently argue that the onset of the eleventh century brought more regular precipitation to India than the preceding two or three centuries. It would not be unlikely that the climate in the subcontinent was generally more moist.<sup>6</sup> The period after 1000 looms large in the economic historiography of early India as one of unprecedented rural expansion, which would have been barely sustainable without adequate hydraulic resources.

### Hydraulic systems and village settlements

This paves the way for a discussion of the early Indian understanding of human habitations. In most literary presentations, the forest (*aranya*) was conceived as an arena for wild beasts, dangerous robbers, and fierce demons (*rakshasa*) defiling the sacred sacrifices of sages and forest hermits who had their hermitages (*asrama*) there. The forest was thus perceived as a space in contrast to the settled environment of the village (Malamoud 1998). Sanskrit sources described a settlement area with multiple villages as a territory (*rashtra*) or a *janapada*, referring to the feet (*pada*) of the people (*jana*). More specifically, these terms distinguished agricultural settlement spaces from both city (*pura/nagara*) and fortified capital (*durga*). The ideal *janapada* would naturally have within it arable tracts (*kshetra*), habitation areas (*vastu*) and uncultivated fallow land (*khila*).<sup>7</sup> The space intervening between the *janapada* and the forest was generally earmarked as pasture grounds (*vraja/gocara*) (Chakravarti 1998). The spread of sedentary agricultural settlements around 1000 involved changes in fallow, pasture and forest tracts.

Insightful analyses of copper plate charters during the last decade effectively demonstrate that rural settlements were neither undifferentiated nor isolated, thereby abolishing the well-entrenched notion of the self-sufficient, stagnant and enclosed village in traditional India. We therefore need a model of agricultural expansion that describes activities taking place in multiple villages. We cannot

evaluate settlement expansion and the enhanced use of natural resources, including hydraulic reserves, merely according to the *Arthasastra* model dating back to the third century BCE, which recommended an active and predominant role for the political authority in the creation of fresh janapadas.<sup>8</sup> The *Arthasastra* measures are often portrayed by historians as a uniform and standard method for creating new settlements irrespective of time and space, through intense involvement of royal administration. I suggest, instead, that the clue to settlement expansion lies in the creation of revenue-free land grants largely in favor of religious donees.

### **A regional survey of agricultural regimes**

Let us look first at the agricultural and hydraulic situation in the northeast. One inscription from Bangladesh portrays the largest known brahmanical colonization program in north India planned and designed by a political authority, an extensive settlement created in the tenth century in Srihatta (Sylhet area). The impressive size of the settlement, probably created out of fallow tracts through application of mensuration principles (*bhumicchidraṇyayena*), is evident from the considerable administrative restructuring required to assemble a contiguous tract, involving the merging of three districts (*vishaya*). This area had extensive forest and marshy lands in descriptions on copper plates from seventh and eighth centuries. In 930 it became a "brahmana city" (*brahmapura*) with 6,000 brahmanas and their families, a large number of craftsmen, and service groups. The record informs us of the presence in Srihatta of outsiders (*desantariya*) and of people from Vangala (*vangaladesiya*, the area of modern Bangladesh), indicating the populating of this area with inhabitants brought from elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> Though the immigrants propitiated identical deities (Mahakala, Jamini, Yogesvara and Agni), they required two separate monastic establishments; this is a unique event in early medieval Indian history (Sircar 1983: 92-94). The entire complex was certainly sustained by agricultural resources obtained by bringing hitherto uncultivated tracts under the plough.

An interesting variation is visible in the Varendri region, the very heartland of the Pala dynasty (ca. 750-1200). Varendri or Varendra (corresponding to Rajshahi, Bogra and Dinajpur districts in modern Bangladesh) had been a flourishing, settled area for centuries, and stood as the ancestral home of the Pala kings,<sup>10</sup> when they temporarily lost control because of an internal rebellion around 1070. Royal

control was restored under Ramapala (1072-1127), the last great ruler of the dynasty and the hero of the celebrated Sanskrit text, the *Ramacharitam* of Sandhyakaranandin. After narrating how the Palas re-established political authority in Varendri through supplanting of the rebel, the text describes the attempts undertaken to improve the war-ravaged agrarian economy. Besides bringing back regular cultivation, Ramapala is credited with the construction of "public works of great utility in the shape of large lakes with tall palm trees and lines of hillocks on their border, so as to make them look like veritable seas." These artificial water bodies were certainly larger and more impressive than ordinary tanks (*tadaga*) and ponds (*pushkarini*), and represent an amplification of hydraulic resources. No less significant is the text's account of the levy of only mild taxes, obviously to ensure that the local human resources did not desert the war-torn territory.

The greater part of the Ganga River valley and the Ganga delta was watered by perennial rivers of glacial origin and well nourished by rains; this region, including Bengal, belonged to the category of *devamatrika* (area with profuse rainfall) and *nadimatrika* (riverine) tracts. Within this environment, hydraulic resources and facilities were important landmarks of rural space. The eleventh century charters from Bengal and Bihar contain regular references to rivers, streams (*srotosvini*), rivulets (*ganginika*), dikes (*khata/kulya*) and embankments (*ali/brihadali*). Aside from the panegyric of Ramapala's interventions, there is little indication of the construction of large, supra-local hydraulic projects by politico-administrative authorities in this region.<sup>11</sup>

We may now turn our attention to more arid western India, especially Rajasthan and Gujarat, the latter becoming more famous for its agrarian economy featuring cereals and cash crops like cotton, oilseeds, indigo, and sugar cane. Agricultural prosperity is evident from indigenous sources and also from prominent references in Arabic, Persian and Chinese accounts. One source describes the transformation of uncultivated high land (*uddhakhilabhumi*) into an arable tract by a farmer who is said to have newly come from outside (*navya-samayatakutumbikaih*).<sup>12</sup> Hemachandra (1088-1172), the famous Jaina writer from Gujarat, seems to have been aware of the effects of growth on agrarian settlements, when he suggested in his *Parisishtaparvan* that many villages were beginning to assume the character of towns (*gramascha purasannibha*, *Parisistaparvan* 1.8).<sup>13</sup> The agrarian growth was certainly due in part to improved iron technology, for Hemachandra was aware of the regular use of iron implements for agriculture. No less instrumental was the introduction of technology to

utilize hydraulic resources for transforming undeveloped (*akrita*) into developed (*krita*) agricultural tracts.

Reservoirs were used for irrigation (*sechanartham*) and for moistening sown seeds (*siktam bijam*), as mentioned in the Jaina text *Upamitibhavaprapanchakatha* (906). Besides the usual local level irrigation projects like tanks and wells (*kupa*), new irrigation tools like *araghatta/arahatta* and *vapi*, particularly suitable for lifting water from great depths, began to appear in texts describing technology. While the *araghatta* is a type of water wheel in wide use,<sup>14</sup> the *vapi* (a term derived from the Sanskrit root *vap*, meaning to sow) describes the step-wells (*baolis*) which abound in Gujarat even now. In sharp contrast to the stray references to the *vapi* in the tenth-century *Samarangana-sutradhara* of Bhoja, the *Aparajitapricchha* of Bhuvanadeva (1950) devotes a full and elaborate chapter (ch. 74) to local level irrigation devices including the *vapi*.

The security provided by a branch of the Chalukyas in Gujarat as dominant regional rulers encouraged the tendency to build storage tanks and other irrigation projects. Thus Mularaja (941-996) is known to have directed his officers to dig wells and tanks and construct *vapis*. The tank excavated at Anahilapataka (present Patan) was named after Durlabharaja (reigned 1010-1024). Similarly, the two tanks commissioned under king Karna (1066-94) were named after him (Karnasagara); the same ruler is credited with the construction of a *vapi* at Davad. In 1099 the Chalukya king Siddharaja endowed a piece of land for the maintenance of a step well that had been constructed by the son of a minister (*amatya*) in northern Gujarat. In some instances the kings seem to have been directly involved in the construction of irrigation facilities; in most cases, they interacted with subordinates who took the initiative in consultation with local leaders (Jain 1989: 24-34).

In Rajasthan, an area with less rainfall than Gujarat, inscriptions from the eleventh century suggest that the introduction of irrigation technologies resulted in the production of diverse crops even in this arid environment. *Vapis* and *araghattas* appear more frequently as important landmarks in the rural space in Rajasthani inscriptions of the eleventh century than in those of ninth and tenth centuries; *araghattas* are also quite prominent in the records as local level irrigation projects. In a sure indicator of familiarity with the technology, a tenth-century sculpture from Mandor depicts an *araghatta* along with a number of men and beasts (including camels) around it. In 1059 another *araghatta* was constructed with reference to a rice field. Even more interesting information is furnished by an inscription of 1110 from Sevadi, Pali

district, recording the connection of an araghatta with a double-cropped field yielding both summer and winter crops (*saradiyagraismakakshetra*) (Chattopadhyaya 1990, 1994).

We may now pass on to peninsular India, an area that may not be as arid as Rajasthan, but with its own uncertainties of rainfall and imperative to conserve hydraulic resources. The southwestern monsoon does bring in profuse orographic rainfall on the Western Ghat mountain ranges, but as winds pass on to the interiors of Maharashtra and Karnataka they drop much less precipitation. The northeastern monsoon brings some rains, mainly confined to Andhra Pradesh and eastern part of Tamil Nadu. All of the rivers in peninsular India are entirely rain-fed; water is thus a precious natural resource, conserved and controlled from a remote antiquity.

Karnataka experienced the India-wide rise in land grant issuance. In an example from 904, describing the activities of a petty ruler in founding a village within a forest tract, paddy fields lay on the riverside and an excavated tank lay within the village. In the very next year, when a brahmana donor created a rural settlement for immigrant brahmanas, a huge tank fed by three streams from a nearby forest adequately served the newly established settlement, which may have grown after the clearing of a part of the forest.<sup>15</sup> In an eleventh-century example, a merchant (*sresthi*) cleared another forest tract in Sorab taluk near a previously established *agrarahara*, excavated a tank, and laid out paddy fields.<sup>16</sup> These cases indicate a process that must have been occurring continually in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The result of these initiatives was demographic growth (*janodaya*).<sup>17</sup>

Throughout Karnataka, the main form of local level irrigation was the artificial lake or tank, a category of public works designated as bunds aligned with natural sources of water (*sahodaka setu*) designed to trap runoff from rainfall. After 1000 one notes the construction of tanks with channels that were connected with rivers, described as bunds artificially fed with water (*aharyodaka setu*). Water managers regularly used sluices to control the inward and outward flow of water for these tanks. As early as 890, an inscription speaks of a tank with four sluices. Mention of the "northern" sluice in another inscription of 1090 suggests the existence of more than one sluice in a tank. There are many epigraphic references to regular inspections and repairs of tanks and sluices. Boats were often employed to dredge the tanks, in order to maintain their capacity to hold water (Nandi 2000). As an outcome of these efforts to provide improved hydraulic resources, agrarian expansion and growth certainly took place in Karnataka. A clear illustration of this is seen in the perception of the *kanguda* variety



of paddy, earlier viewed as an inferior type, but in the twelfth-century *Manasollasa* of Somesvara III (1961-67) considered excellent (*sutandula*) and fit to be included in royal dietary practices.<sup>18</sup>

In the far south, Chola inscriptions are replete with praises to the river Kaveri as the life-giving stream in the core area of the Cholas (*cholamandalam*). The vast body of inscriptions from this area shows, however, that tanks, and not large-scale riverine constructions, formed the backbone of the irrigation system outside the immediate vicinity of the Kaveri River delta. The outstanding feature of the management of hydraulic resources was the active role of village assemblies, both in the brahmana-dominated villages (*brahmadeya*) and non-Brahmana villages (*ur*). Within the village assembly, a committee composed of elected annual representatives looked after village tanks (*eri variyam*). The village assembly also looked after the collection of income from tanks (*eri ayam*) and arranged for the subsequent spending of money for the development of tanks and other public works. Elaborate and careful provisions for the maintenance and use of the irrigation facilities are laid down in inscriptions from Uttaramerur in the years 921 and 922. Dredging measures provided silt from the bottom of the tanks, piled up with a view to strengthening their embankments. A typical example of this is furnished by the Tiruvalangadu plates of the time of Rajendra I, which lay down a set of terms and conditions (*vyavastha*) for the users of irrigation facilities. Cultivators for whom the irrigation project was not intended were not entitled to cut open branch channels, dam the water, or bale it out with small baskets. These measures reflect the concern of the water managers to conserve hydraulic resources; the stress is clearly on the optimum use, and not the indiscriminate use, of relatively scarce facilities (Venkayya 1902; Appadorai 1936; Ramachandra Dikshitar 1945-46; Nilakantha Sastri 1955; Mahalingam 1967).

Finally, we should note the many inscriptions from Chola-period Tamil Nadu that mention the establishment of new settlements along with the digging, extension and repair of irrigation systems. This process was occurring on the edges of the older irrigated zones along the Kaveri and other rivers, but seems particularly dynamic in drier areas. For example, an inscription describes how a settlement in Kottai Nadu in the Salem area was started by a brahmana by clearing bushes and thickets, bringing dry lands under cultivation and providing the area with irrigation channels (*Epigraphia Indica* 5: 52).

## Conclusion

The above survey of the proliferation of agrarian settlements in disparate regions of the subcontinent reveals some variations in the patterns of expansion of agriculture and utilization of hydraulic resources, but also some common elements. There is a near absence of large scale, supra-local irrigation projects, and a distinct preponderance of local-level irrigation projects utilizing locally available hydraulic resources, initiated by individuals or by representative assemblies. This phenomenon holds good for the ponds, streams, rivulets, and embankments in the relatively moist environment of Bengal and the Ganga delta; the araghatta, the ghatiantra and the vapi in the arid environment of Rajasthan and parts of Gujarat; and the chains of tanks and increasing channel-fed tanks in Karnataka. In other words, our study does not offer an image of a changeless "hydraulic society" as the breeding ground of centralized Oriental despotism (Wittfogel 1957). Water technology and administration cannot be explained from the point of view of apex political authorities.

On many occasions the expansion of agriculture and the arrangement of irrigation facilities became possible with the clearance of forest tracts. But the clearance of forests with the help of copper or iron implements or by burning does not seem to have brought about widespread deforestation and the resultant environmental adversities. Despite the continuous spread of agrarian settlements, the impressive density of forests in the pre-colonial times is evident in the sources of Mughal times and the accounts of European travelers beginning in the early sixteenth century.

Because sources are absent, one is not sure about the impact of forest clearance on the erstwhile dwellers of forests, nomadic and hunting-gathering groups. We do know that many of these forest people figure in normative texts as menial caste groups (*antyaja jati*), and there are many examples of the overall hostile attitude toward them manifested by inhabitants of permanently settled agrarian zones. In one record, a local ruler of Rajasthan named Kakkuka took pride in the fact that he established a market in a place previously inhabited by the "terrible" (*daruna*) Abhiras. Their displacement resulted in the creation of a settlement for excellent or noble people (*sadhujana*) who must have belonged to higher status positions within a jati-varna social system. In Rajasthan, once again, the Chahamana rulers of Naddula (Nadole) glorified themselves for having supplanted the "tribal" Bhillas or Bhils in an arid area (*jangaladesa*), where they founded a new settlement in the core of what would become the Chahamana kingdom of Nadole.

To what extent these displaced forest-dwellers were able to enjoy the fruits of the expanding agrarian resources and irrigation facilities cannot be ascertained at the present state of our knowledge. One does not have to stretch one's imagination too far to suggest that these peoples enjoyed at the most only fringe benefits of the burgeoning agriculture and improved irrigation technologies in the eleventh century.

## Notes

1. For this perspective, see Munshi 1957. This perspective has been sharply criticized in recent times (See Chattopadhyaya 1998).

2. For a general understanding of the process of making of land grants, see Sircar 1965. There has been a strong tendency to suggest that the widespread practice of land grants signified a closed, self-sufficient village economy, de-urbanization, "monetary anemia," and the growing rigors of the jati-varna society. Centralized polity was replaced with a feudal set-up characterized by a dismembered, decentralized polity and the parcellization of sovereignty (Kosambi 1957, Yadava 1973, Sharma 1980, Jha 2000). For alternatives and critiques, see Chattopadhyaya 1994, Kulke 1994, Stein 1980, Heitzman 1997).

3. It is significant that Ibn Majid, the great navigator of the western Indian Ocean in the fifteenth century, was fully aware of fury of the sea swelled by the typical summer monsoons. He recommended voyages across the western Indian Ocean only with the gradual slackening of the southwest monsoon after late August. He termed the rainy season as *vishkal*, obviously derived from the Sanskrit term *varshakala* (Tibbitt 1971).

4. No less significant is the observation of the geographers that the periods of low Nile flood correspond to cooler periods in western Europe, where long-range meteorological data have been more precisely recorded.

5. Quinn (1992: 143 and Table 6.7) demonstrates that the period from 1000 to 1290 represented the Little Climatic Optimum (LCO), and the subsequent 1291-1522 phase was an interim period between the LCO and a Little Ice Age (LIA).

6. Utilizing Nile flood data, M. K. Dhavalikar (2000) speaks of a long period of relative lack of rain and consequent aridity in India from the seventh century onwards. In his opinion, this aridity adversely affected human settlements in India during post-Gupta times (600-1200). Dhavalikar draws from various literary sources to suggest that environmental change during this time led to frequent outbreaks of famine and contributed to the decline of many urban centers that had flourished before 600. He thus highlights an environmental factor in the urban decay in India during the post-Gupta times. While his suggestions are apparently supported by the Nile flood data and independent data on colder climate in western Europe, it is difficult to subscribe to his thesis of wholesale and widespread decay of urbanization in India. He obviously

bases himself on the concept of "urban anemia" propounded by R. S. Sharma (1987); the validity of the perspective of an overall urban decline in the entire subcontinent has been questioned on both empirical and conceptual grounds (Chattopadhyaya 1994, 1995; Chamapakalakshmi 1995, 1996). A recent critique of the concepts of declining trade and urban contraction is available in Chakravarti (2001 and 2002b).

7. Rural settlements figure in royal charters with high and low lands (*satala-soddesa*), saline areas with pits (*sagarttosara*), dry and wet tracts (*sajalasthala*), shrubs and bushes (*sajhatavitapa*), dumping grounds (*avaskara*) and grasslands for grazing of cattle extending to the end of the village (*sasimatrinaputigocaraparyanta*).

8. See the treatment of janapada creation (*janapadanivesa*) in Kautilya 1967-1972, 2: ch. 1.

9. One may assume that the sharp difference between the *desantariya* and the *vangaladesiya* in the newly created "brahmana city" could signal their unequal access to resources in this area (Ray et al. 2000: 634-35).

10. Northern Bengal had a complex and developed economy with a strong agricultural foundation as early as the third century BCE, as illustrated by the fragmentary Mahasthangarh stone plaque inscription. This record mentions the cultivation of paddy and sesamum, a royal granary, and the well planned, prosperous city of Pundranagara (Mahasthan in Bangladesh), the earliest known urban center of Bengal and still an impressive archaeological site. The region's prosperity continued in the Gupta age (fourth-sixth centuries) and during the reign of Sasanka (ca. 600 to 619 if not up to 637). Varendri or Varendra, in the heartland of north Bengal, was described as the ancestral home (*janakabhu*) of the Pala kings in the *Ramacharitam* (Sandhyakaranandin 1969).

11. The only exception to this general pattern is the unique practice of levying a water cess (*jalakara*) in the twelfth century Gahadhavala realm around Kanyakubja (Sircar 1966).

12. Indian texts and copper plate charters seem to differentiate a hitherto uncultivated tract (*khila*) from an arable plot deliberately left fallow (*khilakshetra*), the latter term referring to the common agrarian practice of keeping lands fallow for a period to restore their fertility. In a thirteenth-century copper plate from southeastern Bangladesh, administrative abbreviations were used to suggest such different categories of fallow tracts. Thus *mu-ti* (*mundatikkara*) meant a tract kept fallow, while *chi-khi-mu-ti* (*chirakhilamundatikkara*) stood for a tract never before brought under the plough (Sircar 1966).

13. This description provides a counterpoint to the account of towns in the *Brihannaradiya Purana*, where towns were beginning to wear the look of villages (*nayarani gamabhuyani hohinti*), used by Yadava (1973) to argue for urban decay and ruralization in the wake of a decline in trade and crafts. Contrary evidence that agrarian prosperity and expansion of agriculture could turn a village into a node for local-level grain exchange comes from an epigraphic reference to Naddula, a village in Rajasthan (Chattopadhyaya 1994 ; Chakravarti 2002a). Located in close proximity to twelve villages, it gradually

became a local level market center (*mandapika*), then a city (*nagara*), and finally the political seat of the Nadole Chahamana kings. Chattopadhyaya (1990) has illuminated the history of a village named Kalikatti in twelfth-century Karnataka, which began as an ordinary village, then became an outstanding or most prosperous village, then assumed a nearly urban profile.

14. The term *araghatta* is also explained in lexicons as a deep well. The term is occasionally mentioned along with another irrigation device, called *ghatiyantra* or a pot garland. Such a device consisted of a number of pots tied to a rope, probably set on a deep well and moved with the help of a pulley. The *araghatta* and the *ghatiyantra* were particularly useful in dry areas where ground water could be reached only at a considerable depth. The term *araghatta* is often translated as Persian wheel, but Irfan Habib is of the opinion that the Persian wheel (*saqia*) was not in regular use in the Indian agrarian scenario prior to thirteenth-fourteenth centuries. He differentiates it from *noria*, i.e. a water wheel carrying pots or buckets fixed on its rim. The *noria*, however, prevalent from the ninth or tenth centuries onwards, did not have a chain to carry pots nor did it have a gearing mechanism, typical of the *saqia* (Habib 1969). It is better, therefore, to use the term *araghatta* in the generic sense of a water wheel. That the *araghatta* was widely used as a hydraulic mechanism will be evident from its use by Merutunga, the Jaina author of the *Prabandhachintamani*, who compares the fickleness of fortune with the circular rotation of buckets on the water wheel (*ghatijalayantra chakre*) (quoted in Jain 1990: 29). For a different interpretation of *araghatta*, see Gopal 1980.

15. *Epigraphia Carnatica* 10, Goribidnur Taluk 47.

16. *Epigraphia Carnatica* 8, Sorab Taluk 317.

17. The term *janodaya* occurs in the inscription of 904 cited in note 15.

18. Somesvara III's *Manasollasa* 3, 1373-74; quoted in Nandi 2000, 325-26.

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## Chapter 5

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### Different transitions: The year 1000 in China's environmental history

Mark Elvin

#### Introduction: Robust paths in pre-modern China

The environmental historian has to think long-term: sometimes not even in centuries, but in millennia. For us, the environmental-historical significance of the year 1000 for China depends on its place in the perceived *paths* across time that we have constructed as concepts (with millennial hindsight) encompassing long-term changes in China's society and its interactions with its environment.

I use the term *paths* because it is theoretically non-committal. A word such as “trajectories,” suggesting an analogy with ballistics, would imply a high degree of predetermination. This might be acceptable as a conclusion, but it should not be smuggled in *a priori*. The term “cycles” is even more dangerous, for three reasons.

First, there are demonstrable long-term trends in China's history, most evident in the multi-millennial development of technologies for production and destruction. These trends are also visible in the long-term increase and widening geographical extension of "Chinese" populations, in spite of transient decreases and withdrawals. The transformation of the landscape by deforestation was also predominantly unidirectional, as was its conversion to farming, partly by means of hydraulic and other large-scale engineering works such as terracing. People steadily obliterated the habitat of many animals, the elephant being an example. Another long-term trend, at the junction of politics, economics and the environment, was the slow disappearance of *de facto* common lands and the privatization of most of the land surface, mountains included.

Second, there were fluctuations. Some were shifts on a time scale of centuries, such as the mean annual temperature and the levels of humidity or aridity. Others have been point-like shocks from the outside, such as the invasions by the Jürchen and the Mongols. Fluctuations are not cycles, but may at times give the impression of being such.

Third, an authentic cycle must be defined in terms of a mechanism that reverses itself, for reasons intrinsic to its nature, at both its extreme points. Any case made for describing a cycle should not only supply such a mechanism, but also an analysis that controls for the effects of long-term trends and fluctuations. The concept should thus be excluded from any initial assumptions, though in principle permissible as a conclusion.

The term *paths* allows both for "robust" processes, that is, those that move in the same broad direction with a high degree of indifference to large variations in inputs, and for "critical" processes, that is, those whose direction varies greatly in response to small variations in inputs.<sup>1</sup>

In this methodological context, it is plausible to examine a number of robust processes in Chinese history during the period from the formation of urban-agrarian society to the point in the late imperial age when non-biological sources of directed, mobile, controllable, and transmissible energy began to replace older biological sources. (The criteria defined by these adjectives are designed to exclude traditional wind and water power). Robust processes include those already indicated for pre-modern Chinese technology, demography, and landscape transformation. They have been accompanied by the "Sinification" of non-Han peoples, effected by a mix of conquest, expulsion, extermination, intermarriage, and cultural conversion.

The major claim of this chapter, simply stated, is that around the year 1000 different regions of China were at widely separated points along broadly similar robust paths. The *prima facie* case for robustness is that, in general terms, later-developing regions did not diverge far from the patterns established by the regions that developed earlier. In most cases, the limited divergences can be explained by environmental constraints such as climate, terrain, and natural resources. This hypothesis is illustrated (not proven) by a sample contrast between two regions: Jiaxing, in the province of Zhejiang on the eastern coast; and Zunhua, in the northeastern corner of China proper, not far from Beijing.

In 1000, Jiaxing was entering into the Chinese medieval economic revolution (Elvin 1973, part 2), the second distinctive stage of the Chinese style of pre-modern economic growth (PMEG).<sup>2</sup> Its economy, based on a highly R-productive agriculture<sup>3</sup> featuring rice in the Yangzi valley and further south, included the following features: intensified commercialization creating a nationwide market in some commodities (but not a “national market” technically defined by a given good having a single national price); almost universal monetization with both credit and contracts; urbanization; increased literacy based on woodblock printing; and improved transport, especially by water. This period witnessed the end of cultivable land as an abundant commodity and the beginning of land scarcity most of the time, along with serious shortages of wood for fuel and construction. A systematic hydraulic control – though still technically imperfect compared to what came later – was imposed on the greater part of the farming landscape. Spiritually, Buddhist sentiments dominated the environmental ethos, though they lacked the intensity that can at times be found among the pioneers of Chinese Buddhism half a millennium or so earlier. Jiaxing remained in this second, or middle stage of the PMEG until Mongol times (thirteenth century).<sup>4</sup>

Zunhua in 1000 was part of a largely un-Sinified frontier zone between the Qidan/Liao and the Jürchen on the one side and the Han Chinese on the other. Minimally “developed,” it was a domain of forests, fruit-trees, and hunting by non-Han peoples, abutting on a non-Han pastoral economy to the north. These features remained predominant until the seventeenth century.<sup>5</sup>

These two regions will exemplify the proposition that there was no single environmental meaning to the year 1000 in the Chinese context. Instead, a multiplicity of meanings existed for different regions that we

may interpret, with hindsight, as functions of how far they had moved along distinctive paths of Chinese-style pre-modern development.

And the year 1000 itself? For the Chinese calendar, this time frame included the last lunar month of the second year of the Xianping reign-period of the emperor Zhenzong of the Song dynasty, plus the eleven months that followed in the third year—perhaps a little lacking in numerological magic.

## **Jiaxing**

Unlike many Europeans before the eighteenth century (Corbin 1988, ch. 1), the Chinese never regarded the shoreline as stable. Experience made it clear that the opposite was the case. Originally natural forces alone, and later a combination of natural and human causation, constantly reshaped the Jiaxing coast. In some places inhabited land was swept away, as for example at Wangpan, once linked with the mainland but now a mountainous island about twenty kilometers offshore. Much of the old north shore of inner Hangzhou Bay, just south of Jiaxing, was lost in the same way. Land once salterns and pastures is today under water (Elvin and Su 1995, 8, 21). In other places people have built up the land, as in the Nanhui peninsula south of the Yangzi River's mouth and just north of Jiaxing (Elvin and Su 1998, 352).

Jiaxing in the early imperial age was a reed-covered marshland where wild rice is said to have grown (JXFZ 1879, 783). Cultivators also raised domesticated rice, "plowing by burning, and weeding by flooding," although the nature of their technology is a source of controversy (Watabe and Sakurai 1984, 1-54). Additional occupations at this time were fishing, hunting, boiling brine from the sea for salt, and cutting timber in the hills (ZJHZ 1990, 4500). This last activity did not continue in medieval times, which suggests deforestation. Food, including fruits and shellfish, was so abundant that the poor are said to have lived from day to day without needing to keep reserves.

The people of the local pre-imperial states, Wu and Yue, were known for their ferocity. It is a curiosity of history that their successors had the reputation of being exceptionally lacking in military character. One biography of a sixteenth-century Jiaxing man who organized resistance to "Japanese pirates" (most of whom were Chinese) observed, "The men of Zhejiang are . . . unaccustomed to fighting" (JXFZ 1600, 791).

In early medieval times, the sea still infiltrated deeply into Jiaxing, which remained an environmentally ambiguous world, half ocean water and half salt marsh. This rich landscape was becoming ever more domesticated and decorated by human art, shaped by water control, sea walls, canals, locks, levees, roads and bridges. Its visage was now set off, like a face by cosmetics, with inscribed steles bestowing their stories and hence their meanings on particular places, and by temples that both enhanced and spiritually subdued the once wild slopes and summits. Magic still lingered in the landscape, in the memories of Daoist immortals and the illustrious dead, rain-bringing dragons that haunted the wells and springs, and local deities with dominion over epidemics, locusts, or other disasters.<sup>6</sup> It was an age when the cool, elite rationalism of late imperial times was still some way in the future.

Under the Middle Empire, the people constructed sea walls and desalinated the land behind them, establishing polders that were the key to intensive rice cultivation. The construction of coastal locks to block rivers removed the effect of seasonal peak discharge, which had previously joined with the ebb tide in scouring away coastal sediments. Upriver stripping of vegetation cover in the Yangzi valley increased the sediment load transported by this river, and part of it curled around clockwise once out in the sea<sup>7</sup> and was re-deposited along the coast to the south. Thus did the shoreline constantly undergo transformation.

The battle to block the seas was not won completely in medieval times. According to the Qing gazetteer,

The Taiping seawall was built in 713-741 under the Tang. Under the Song, in 1131-1162, Qiu Lei, the county magistrate of Haiyan, constructed ten kilometers of dikes. In 993-1003, the transport commissioner Chang Mao built the nine to ten kilometers of the New Dike. In 1364, under the Yuan, county magistrate Gu Yong constructed the sixteen kilometers of the Sea-Defense Dike. All of these dikes were, however, made of earth and so easily destroyed (JXFZ 1600, 509-13).

Only in the fifteenth century did people identify a durable method of construction using interlocking stones. This method, with various additions at times such as pilings and groins, thereafter seems to have become fairly standard.<sup>8</sup> In the end, Jiaxing largely won its war against the sea, at a considerable human and environmental cost. But not yet in the year 1000.

The internal hydraulic domestication of Jiaxing, and more particularly Haiyan county, took about four hundred years. According to the prefectural gazetteer,

In 763-4, under the Tang, the commissioner for military colonies Zhu Zimian dredged the ditches to reach the sluiceways, and the sluiceways to reach the streams, and for the first time they were of economic benefit . . . Haiyan as it is today has the three hundred and one old creeks opened in 821-24 by Li E, who [also] created the Ever-Bumper Locks. During 993 to 1003, under the Song, Lu Zongdao [re]directed the water in Indigo Field Inlet and White Tower Channel over a distance of 9 kilometers. In 1056-63 Li Wei ji dredged the sluiceways and drains, installed wooden locks, and put in place thirty district-boundary embankments.<sup>9</sup> In 1131 to 1162 Li Zhiyang repaired eighty district-boundary embankments, and the two Ever-Bumper locks (JXFZ 1600, 491-92).

Underneath the success story, however, different economic and environmental interests and state intervention, including the use of the military when it was thought appropriate, created social turmoil.<sup>10</sup> Transport versus irrigation was the classic conflict, and in some places and times, as at Ganpu in the mid-thirteenth century, private control of waterways even seems to have held the upper hand over an irritated officialdom (*Ganshui zhi* 1990, 5: 4662).

The people of Jiaying pinned down and controlled the landscape by building polders, or "surrounded fields." These had the shape of inverted shallow conical hats, with a raised rim – the protective dike – around the outside, and channels sloping gently down to a common drainage ditch at the bottom. Under the Middle Empire, the fields of the better-off cultivators were at the top of the polder, where they both had easier access to the water outside and were easier to drain into the ditch below.<sup>11</sup> Precise control of the input and draining of water enabled the backbreaking transplantation of seedlings, which allowed the maximal exploitation of each polder. Water had to be pumped in at transplanting time, and later pumped out as the harvest ripened; keeping the channels dredged and the locks maintained proved an unending drudgery. Workers experienced diminishing returns from additional hours of work. Their technology was by no means technically perfected, for a thirteenth-century gazetteer commented that certain lakes had "recently . . . all become enclosed fields," but that where more dikes and fields had been built along their edges, "the annual floods are stored in an increasingly constricted space" (ZJHZ 4441-42). Here was a recipe for disaster in years of heavy rainfall. The sea also remained dangerous, and every storm left the corpses of the drowned washed up on the sands.<sup>12</sup>

In Haiyan county there was no natural source of irrigation water, which had to be drawn from official reservoirs. Ten days without rain could set all the pumps working in the fear that the rice fields would dry out. Within these environmental and technical limitations, the resource-base of cultivated, as opposed to wild, plants was widening. Crops newly mentioned as economically important in medieval times include wheat, beans, hemp, and cotton. Silk was now also produced. Reeds had to be cultivated to serve as fuel for brine boiling, which points to a shortage of wood (ZJHZ 4451-53, 4455).

There came a moment in the history of most regions in China when the economic input in shortest supply was no longer labor power but land. This moment is difficult to pinpoint, but the haziness of its definition in no way means that the change was unimportant; it is likely that it altered almost every facet of economic and social interaction, fostering among other effects an intensified preoccupation with landed property. In Jiaxing, this transition from labor to land as the key scarce component in the economy took place between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. The number of registered inhabitants per square kilometer in 980 was 15; between 1080 and 1102, it was an average of 84; and in 1290 it was 294 (Shiba 1988, 146). The nature of the transition can be illustrated by contrasting the period when there was enough land for the government to create military agricultural colonies like those of Zhu Zimian, mentioned above, with the later age when long-lasting legal battles were fought over small patches of acreage. The military colonies formed in Jiaxing after the devastation of the mid-eighth-century rebellion covered an area of about 250 square kilometers:<sup>13</sup> "The seeds were broadcast by means of the breezes, and the roots consolidated by means of the rain." There was no transplanting of rice, and irrigation was something of a novelty as shown by the phrase "they made the ditches *serve as their weather*" (JXFZ 1879, 196). Although the circumstances were special, obviously land was not a scarce resource at that time. We can glean society's attitude toward farmland after the transition through a 1219 account by Qian Fu, a compiler in the Privy Council, who penned *A Record of the Restoration of the School Fields* (that is, fields whose income supported Confucian scholars). It records administrative corruption in Jiaxing, and legal battles over only 0.285 square kilometers of land, pitting monks against educational authorities for a quarter of a century (ZJHZ, 4532-4533).

Clashes also developed over wood, already becoming a scarce resource in some areas. The Song-dynasty gazetteer for Ganpu recounts how "the salt-making households and the commoners fought

between themselves over the hills providing firewood. Lawsuits occurred from the period of the Five Dynasties [907–960] until the present [Song] dynasty . . . Every year there were armed clashes in the hills, and people were continually being killed” (*Ganshui zhi* 1990, 5: 4661). The authorities restored peace by assigning parts of what had once been generally accessible non-agricultural land to particular families and communities: they privatized the commons.

In a time of increasing competition for resources, the life of “ordinary” people was tough. Poems tell us of poverty, harsh weather or excessive taxation, and peasants’ wives and children sold into prostitution and servitude. These were genre pieces, but also clichés that happened in fact. “The Song of an Inspector of Fields” by Yuan Jie refers to Huating county, part of Xiuzhou (Jiaxing) under the Song and some of the Yuan dynasty (JXFZ 1600, 2192–94). In the words of an old peasant,

In the seventh year of the Yanyou reign, at the start of the third month,  
We sold our clothes to buy a plow, and a hoe for cultivating.  
Mornings we tilled, and evenings weeded. – Great bitterness we suffered  
To pay back the private debts we owed, and the rent due to the government.

Who could have foretold, in the sixth month, and the month following that,  
Rain would be totally absent, with no movement in the tides?  
If we’d had our wish for a single drop, even half a drop, to spatter,  
It would have been worth no less than the blood that reddened the farmers’ eyes.

The Yellow Inlet, once smoothly flowing, became like a ditch or gutter;  
Peasants’ families fought over water, as though pearls were at stake in their struggle.

If several pumpings were tried in succession, the water would not be enough,  
And overnight our paddy fields turned – into sediments and mud.<sup>14</sup>

And he describes how his son and daughter had to be sold.

What matters about this poem is not only that the story is heartbreaking, but that it was commonplace. There are too many poems about the poor selling their children in hard times to let us dismiss them as just literary exaggerations.<sup>15</sup> The combination of heightened vulnerability to extreme events, characterized by child-selling, with an agriculture that in ordinary years was extraordinarily R-productive, suggests that Jiaxing was already moving, not long after the new millennium, into the final stage of Chinese-style PMEG.



By the later empire, the signs of stress already appearing in 1000 were becoming an endemic environmental, economic, and social crisis. A millennium and a half of development had left life and livelihood more vulnerable than they had been at the beginning, when reserves of natural resources could buffer wide shifts in weather or production. In the mid-nineteenth century the population of 2.9 million people was at least thirty times its level two thousand years before (Cao 2001, 5: 471-72). Meanwhile, the variability of the climate demanded constant small adjustments in the schedules of planting out, and matching of seed to local variations in the soil and location for best yields. Thus, the regime of rice farming now existed alongside multi-cropping with dryland winter crops. In a good year these latter could provide half the year's harvest, but there was an extra cost in labor requirements for draining paddies before the winter planting and for rebuilding polder walls each year to prevent flooding. A denser network of markets did provide some added resilience in the face of catastrophes, making it possible, for example, to buy new rice seedlings if it was necessary to replant after a flood. Supplementary fertilizer applied to the crops while they were growing was a late-imperial refinement that improved output, but could easily be mistimed. Collecting and buying fertilizer, often from some distance, placed further pressure on time and money. Where water was distant from the fields, double pumping was also necessary. A telling symptom of stress was the de-gendering of technology. Producing silk yarn remained primarily the work of women, who sacrificed to the goddess of sericulture (JXFZ 1879, 803), but in areas like Haiyan where "the land is constricted and the people numerous, to the extent that exerting oneself at farming does not yield a sufficiency," rearing silkworms was an "urgent matter" in which the men also took part, mostly through the cultivation of mulberry trees. The incessant labor is conveyed by remarks noting that "women and children work flat out" at planting wheat and beans, caring for mulberry trees, and building threshing-floors. If the silkworms failed, the sericulturalists might have to sell their children (JXFZ 1879, 783-85, 788-89, 793).

More generally, the transformation of the natural world by generations of human intervention was leaving it no longer quite "nature" but something else: a human-natural condominium. The lingering presence of local supernatural forces in the streams and mountains still gave them a certain magic, but in a tension with human activities. Some of the elite longed for a spiritual escape mediated through a landscape experienced simultaneously as specific and

universal. In Ming times, the Jiaxing man of letters, Xiang Yuanqi, evoked this longing in his poem, “Going up with my friends to the Vairocana Buddha Pavilion at the end of spring”:

Climbing up to the sumptuous look-out kiosk, there spreads an unbroken view;  
We glance a thousand fathoms down, while unmoving mists glow like cinnabar,  
And, repeatedly, rich and varied scents greet us from different blooms,  
Or, pure as a chiming stone, a sound – sometimes echoes across the distance.

Round the city, its coiling moat-stream – looks like the belt on a garment;  
Out on the sea a mantle of sunshine turns all the islands to gold;  
Our world-pity, stirred by this scene, has opened Lord Buddha’s park;  
Inspiration borrowed from spring blowing past, we talk of the Way – a moment.<sup>16</sup>

## **Zunhua**

In ancient times Zunhua was part of the domain of the Wuzhong, or “mountain barbarians,” a complex of tribes that included the later Xianbi and the Qidan. In the seventh century BCE it was subdued by Qi, the Chinese state to its south, and then became part of the state of Yan. A pre-imperial defensive wall ran across it, as did part of the first imperial Great Wall, though along a different route. Before the Qin it was almost a purely forest economy, having no fields but a wealth of Chinese date-trees and chestnuts. Although Zunhua became an administrative center under the early empire, there was probably only a little farming. At the end of the second century, when the Later Han state was collapsing, a local leader from Wuzhong led his kinsmen and followers “into the Xuwu Mountains, where he encamped on a plateau amid the depths of the defiles, living there for a number of years. The common people rallied to him, reaching more than five thousand families” (ZHTZ 13:21a). This account suggests there was an abundance of land for settlement.

During the political fragmentation from the third to the sixth centuries, Zunhua was on the edge of the small state of the Former Yan and its successor states, and then the Xianbi Empire of the Toba Wei. During this period the spread of a more agricultural way of life among non-Chinese in this northeast region took place when Chinese migrants fled the disorders on the north China plain. Murong Guang, ruler of

Former Yan from 314 to 348, abolished his hunting enclosures and grazing parks to provide farmland and gifts of cattle for the poverty-stricken newcomers. The influx of Han Chinese farmers must also have led to a further round of ethnic mixing. Nonetheless, references in the histories to the seizures of gigantic quantities of livestock (horses, cattle and sheep) by victors in the wars of this age show that the pastoral economy remained important. Feng Ba, founder of the Northern Yan in 409, was a promoter of farming and ordered that those farmers who slacked at it should be put to death. This ferocity suggests difficulty in finding acceptance for the new mode of production. The climate was also unusually cold in this age; agriculture would become easier only in the warmer climate from the end of the sixth century (Lin 1973, 35-36, 77, 80-81, 87, 145, 161, 332).

Under the Tang, in the seventh century, an Imperial Horse-Buying Agency was set up in Zunhua (ZHTZ, 43: 2b, 16: 2b chenghchi). In 937 the area passed under Qidan rule, as part of a block of 16 northeastern prefectures ceded by the Later Jin dynasty. It later came under the Jürchen in the twelfth century and the Mongols in the thirteenth, not reverting to Chinese sovereignty until the start of the Ming, four hundred years after its surrender (Chen 1963; Jin 1981).

Su Che expressed a standard view of "Yan" when he wrote in Song times:

The hills, in the ranges of Yan, wind like a serpent extending  
Over hundreds of leagues, keeping Chinese apart from barbarians.

The author viewed the customs of the people as different from those elsewhere in China: "From long ago they have been accustomed to both farming and fighting." And he added:

At the present, half, already, have it seems acquired the habits  
—Heirs though they be to the Han and Tang—of — sad to say it —  
Savages

(ZHTZ 13:4a, yudi, shanchuan).

Around the year 1000, the economy was a mixture of the old forest world, the pastoralism of the grasslands immediately to its north, and a slowly expanding agriculture from China to the south. We can glimpse this symbiosis from a stele composed under the Qidan-Liao dynasty that describes the restoration of the Buddhist [Golden] Cockerel Sighting Temple. Besides having to reopen the temple pawnshop to provide

income from interest on loans, the estate had to be reorganized under an incorruptible manager lest "the elegance of the mountain work yards merely serves to bring in funds from firewood and stock-raising." The farmland was therefore expanded to 3,000 *mu* and the "mountain forests" to over 10,000 *mu*, with more than 7,000 fruit trees (ZHTZ 47, jinshi, beike, 2a-3a). Some development had thus taken place, but of a patchy nature and probably often based on manorial operations of this type.

Zunhua was the site of the hunting enclosure of the Qidan empress Xiao, consort of Emperor Shengzong, who ruled from 983 to 1030. The carriage in which she was conveyed had a dragon's head and a kite's tail, and was decorated with gold. When she traveled through the mountain valleys during the summer and fall, the carriage hangings seemed to be interwoven with the tapestry-like flowers and trees, so that, it was said, those who descried her in the distance thought she must be a goddess. As late as the nineteenth century, the "Investigation into Back Lake" written by Ding Wei describes how the area, after an unsuccessful attempt in the eighteenth century to grow rice, continued as a venue for the chase:

It is a place where, when the breeze is mild, the overflowing waters gentle, and the clouds low, fish swim idly by and birds take their ease, while animals like foxes and badgers make their way unobtrusively up and down, appearing and disappearing in its midst. Whether one uses a hook or shoots with a bow and arrows, one always hits one's quarry. It happens at times, when the grasses have withered and leaves fallen from the trees, and the level of the water is down so the sands extend out level, that brave men with eagles on their forearms, and brown hounds on leashes behind them, come out on excursions with fur-caparisoned horses and attendants following them. This is because its untenanted space serves as a hunting-ground, and why it is the most celebrated of the swampy thicketed areas in our county (ZHTZ 43: 4ab guji, gongyuan).

The Chinese *History of the Liao Dynasty* expresses an appreciation of the intimate knowledge that Qidan hunters had of the habits and dispositions of wild animals. In particular, "it is the nature of deer to hanker after salt, so they lure them by sprinkling salt on the ground, then shoot them." Hunters might also blow on a horn at night to imitate the cry of a deer, and when the deer had gathered, dispatch them (Chen 1963, 36).

Xianbi songs preserved in Chinese-language versions show how this non-Han people defined life in terms of animals (Lin 1973, 361-64). The warrior had to rise above others:

A man must not waver in what he desires,  
Nor give pledges of friendship to many companions.  
The bird of prey wings on his way through the sky,  
Uncertainty reigns in a rabble of sparrows.

After four verses of amatory *doubles entendres* about riding horses, such as whipping and saddling, a love-song concludes:

A vigorous lad needs a frolicsome mount  
As a frolicsome mount needs a vigorous lad.  
Once hoofed under the dust, and heel-stamped down—  
No more mares-and-stallions after that!

The age-old message: death is coming. Get on with it!  
Moments of delight, however, were possible when one sighted the abundance of the herds:

The sky is azure, deep and rich,  
The plain a vastness, where nothing's distinct.  
Then, as the grasses bend down in the wind,  
Suddenly - sheep and cows are visible.

Even so, a theme of bleakness runs through these songs. One singer thinks of himself as “a changeable wind in the empty wilds,” and someone whose “will to go on is forever broken.” The warrior, for all his glory, is but “a crawling beast, fit for compassion.” In the end:

His corpse lies there killed, in the narrow hill valley,  
With none to pick up his bleached relics of skeleton.

When Su Song visited the Qidan as a Song envoy, he saw flocks of sheep “numbered in hundreds and thousands.” The animals were allowed to find their own way to grass and water in the summer months, and not confined, “yet they multiply most abundantly.” (The Chinese style in animal management tended to favor tighter control). He observed that the Qidan neither trimmed the hooves nor clipped the manes of their horses. “They say that if horses can follow their own nature, they will multiply in greater numbers” (Chen 1963, 30-31). The

author was unhappy to learn, however, that the agricultural tenants he saw were all Chinese and burdened with exactions:

High and low, the balked fields spread away, like the lines on a board for chess.

Counted in valleys-full, horses – and cattle – criss-cross in every direction.

With hundreds of taxes and corvées, there are few days off for leisure.

—It calls for pity that people's lives should be so constantly vexed.

The word “balked” in this poem is used for a Chinese term that means the end of a field, but what Su Song was seeing was probably ridges. An eleventh-century account of the Qidan world by Wang Ceng noted that “everything they plant is on ridges, because of their worry that the blowing sand will block its growth” (Chen 1963, 70, 106).

The Qidan were followed by the Jürchen and the Jürchen by the Yuan (Mongols), but in Chinese eyes Zunhua remained part of China. When, in the mid-fourteenth century, Pan Boxiu wrote an attack in verse on foreign rule over China, he focused on the Yan Mountains (ZHTZ 13: 4b, yudi, shanchuan):

The Liao sea,<sup>17</sup> to the east, is an emptiness, whence no crane is now coming back.

Sleet, falling, chills the horizons of these uplands cluttered with brambles.

Heaven's vault does not move in the frost. The circling eagles have vanished.

The fall sky – high aloft, above tussocked dunes, where well-fed horses are pastured.

Our fair lords, from the land where the sun sets, are singing of military discipline.

In the wind from the west, the hunting horsemen grip the Gold bridle and bit.<sup>18</sup>

But the porcupine, fiercely facing forward, has taken his stand and now risen,

Having broken clear by braving the onslaught – of bows twanging and arrow shafts whistling.<sup>19</sup>

After the Ming conquered Zunhua, it rejoined the main course of Chinese economic history, but with environmentally determined differences. Because of the sandy nature of the soil, water tended to soak out of the fields (ZHTZ 15, yudi, wuchan, gushu, 1b), allowing only a little intensive wet-field rice farming. Some hydraulic schemes

were durable, but many of those involving diversions gave rise to maintenance problems, with channels tending to silt up (ZHTZ 13, Yudi, shanchuan, 16b, 23b (Shuangcheng he), 24b (Lanquan)). It is arguable, however, that more intensive agriculture would have increased rather than reduced economic risk, and hence might have increased stress. A denser population might have been economically in a more precarious position; and the economy might have become locked into the expenditure of the labor, time, resources, and administrative capacity needed for crucial hydraulic maintenance.

Irrigation networks were nonetheless built. The verses on the Meng Family Spring composed by Miu Siqi, county magistrate of Yutian in late Ming times, describe a simple hillside system:

I went out through the eastern suburbs to investigate local customs  
As the spring light shone refulgent on the tree trunks of the forest.  
I looked back on this glorious vista with a sense of regretful reluctance,  
Then turned to my business of making good whatever was falling short.

A river, in a single course, runs down rippling here, and clear,  
As though a dragon were curvetting, submerged beneath its depths.  
Its current deflected by a baffle, it is drawn off into the fields,  
And every drop is worth a jade, the water is so precious.

In alternation, the light and shadow make apparent its flow,  
Nature's creation that human beings can use now to perfection.  
Square-trough pallet-pumps are machinery—known to us from of old,  
Their green spurts tumbling out and over, to water the mountain's belly.

The loam, enriched with moisture, spreads out in a fertile expanse,  
But rice and millet each require the use of a different technique.  
Low dikes have already been built, to demarcate fields and paddies,  
Wet depressions and spaded-up ridges being respective key features.

As we'll plow when a rain-shower's fallen, to furnish us silt-free water,  
We look out for dark cumulus in the distance, starting to cover us over.  
Once these contiguous fertile acres have sweated out evil forces,<sup>20</sup>  
We'll have the use of every part of these lower mountain slopes.

That people should sometimes smilingly mock a raincoat of rough-spun  
fabric

Is an attitude that does not accord with a generous open mind.  
I have my sedan-chair turned about, and start to venture back,  
While the herdsmen, under the setting sun, are descending home from the  
heights (ZHTZ 13: shanchuan, Yutian, 23ab)

This irrigation system was very different from the sluggish creeks of the Yangzi delta, that world of massive levees, polders, and sea walls. Zunhua was not, and could not be, a “hydraulic society.” Many efforts to create irrigated farming proved impossible to maintain. Thus by the later nineteenth century, 1,000 hectares of irrigated fields under state management in Yutian that had received water from the Indigo Spring and the Ronghui River early in the eighteenth century had all turned into dryland fields because of silting up (ZHTZ 13: yudi, shanchuan, 23b-24b).

Pre-modern hydraulic engineering in mountainous areas had to be on a small scale. Here is how the locals handled the Sage Stream:

When summer is passing into fall, and overcast, rainy weather is almost endlessly prolonged, the flow from the spring is greatly increased. It flashes with crystals of light, and pours down like a suspended curtain of pearls. In winter and springtime, the source is stopped up. Its ceaseless dripping resembles a string threaded with pearls. Both aspects can be beautiful.

People have cut into the rock at the base of the cliff wall to make a channel to receive the water. The depth is three feet, and the width about five. They have opened a hidden underground conduit from the tank to drain it, and ground a receptacle out of the stone to receive it. From this it slowly descends by stages into two basins. The lower of these is about a fifth of a hectare in extent, and irrigates the gardens and groves of the local people, the water being transferred by counter-balanced baling-buckets.

On the rocks above these basins the Pavilion of Secluded Cool spreads itself out. Mists and mountain vapors brush and press against each other. Warm greens and cool greens glitter interwoven. The character of this remote scenery is far away from the contamination of this world (ZHTZ 43: 24b “Zunhua shijing”).

Scale matters. Such Lilliputian hydraulic systems could not have had much effect on the social structure. Further expansion, within the same style of technology, was thwarted by an environmental constraint: the seasonal volume of flow. There were limits even on robust processes.

## **Epilogue**

By looking at the period surrounding the year 1000, I have portrayed from an environmental perspective two contrasting areas at a specific



moment on their “robust” paths. For Jiaxing, this period has considerable significance, being close to the burgeoning of the Chinese medieval economic revolution, and the shift from labor to land as the critical economic input in short supply. Its population would rapidly grow more densely settled; there were signs of the coming shortage of wood. For Zunhua, there were no obviously significant changes. It was a Qidan hunting forest through which the Empress Xiao in her gold-embellished carriage hastened like a fugitive goddess, unaware that she had no future but to haunt the dreams of a handful of latter-day scholars—Chinese, European, American, Australian . . .

## Abbreviations

|      |                          |
|------|--------------------------|
| JXFZ | <i>Jiaxing fu zhi</i>    |
| ZHTZ | <i>Zunhua tong zhi</i>   |
| ZJHZ | <i>Zhiyuan Jiahe zhi</i> |

## Notes

1. On robust processes see Goldstone 1991, 53-62. On critical processes, see Bak 1997 and Lorenz 1995.

2. Kuznets (1966, 9) defined the “modern” economic epoch as distinguished by “the extended application of science to problems of economic production.” We may establish a working definition of “pre-modern” economic growth as the inverse—a process in which “science” is *not* regularly applied to improving economic productivity relative either to hours of labor or quantity of resources. The definition includes a further condition that while production per person may increase (as by improvements in skill, understood here as applied to a technology not based on modern science, and also by longer working hours, or access to richer resources), it is at a rate that is normally not long sustainable as efforts directed at further improvements in skill (as defined above), or yet further increases in workload, or access to yet better resources, tend on the whole to have seriously diminishing returns over the course of time.

3. By “R-productive” I mean “productive relative to the quantity of resources used” in farming a unit-area of land. Changes in this measure (typically tons/hectare) do not necessarily vary directly with W-productivity (productivity per hour of work), C-productivity (productivity per unit of capital invested), or E-productivity (the ratio of non-solar energy input to energy output).

4. The third stage of PMEG, beginning as early as Mongol times in Jiaxing, was immensely R-productive but precarious. The residual environmental buffer for bad years had vanished and children were routinely sold during

famines, but an increased level of productivity per person-year and per unit of farmed land became possible through better hydraulics, more complex cropping combinations, and the intensification of the year-round workload, especially for women. Buddhism did not disappear during this third and final pre-modern stage, but was weaker and perhaps more restricted to the humbler classes of society.

5. Under the Ming, Zunhua serviced a sector of the Great Wall defensive complex. Later still, under the Manchus, whose eastern mausoleums were located in the department, it was transformed by three changes. First, the Sino-barbarian frontier disappeared. Second, Chinese-style agrarian development, much of it dryland farming, brought it almost to the level Jiaxing had reached three-quarters of a millennium earlier. (The sandy and unstable soils through which its smallish rivers ran made hydraulics in the style of the Yangzi Valley impossible in spite of several attempts to introduce them.) Third, the northern barbarian attitude to nature – bleakly melancholy and fiercely physical – as it appears through the poems left behind in a Chinese rendering, was replaced by the late-imperial Chinese aesthetic of landscape—sophisticated, distanced, and set in a framework of an intricate, ideologically conditioned vision.

6. To give but one example, in the autumn of 1283 the magistrate Gu Yong wrote a sober account of the Dragon Lord Shrine on Mount Chen in Haiyan county showing how his own faith, prayers, and magical powers had persuaded the dragon to save the people from drought (JXFZ 1879, 287).

7. A result of the Coriolis pseudo-force. An analogy in two dimensions is the curved path taken by a ball rolled across the surface of a rotating turntable.

8. By late imperial times, sea walls were huge constructions faced with stone, often with groins and a sloping glacis, or stone apron, on the seaward side (Elvin and Su 1995, 42-44, 48).

9. The translation of this technical term is tentative.

10. JXFZ 1600, 493. After the Song dynasty had moved its capital south to Hangzhou in the second third of the twelfth century, Jiaxing was filled with powerful in-migrant families. Many of them drained lakes and wetlands to make fields. The military also rebuilt some of the lakeshore dikes so that they could profit from the so-called “barrage fields” inside. During times of flood, these are said to have “towered like peaks” above everything else. They also blocked the outlets to the channels downstream, making it hard for the common people to drain their fields. Hydraulic transformation thus took a long time to stabilize.

11. In the more egalitarian rural society of Qing times, the fields tended to be divided like slices of pie, running down from top to bottom.

12. ZJHZ 4444, 4450, 4452, 4597. Famines, floods and droughts in early imperial times on the whole affected much smaller numbers of people than under the Middle Empire. Some time between 107 and 125, the magistrate of Wuyuan (that is, roughly, Haiyan) opened the granaries when there was a famine and “saved the lives of three hundred households” (about 1,500 individuals). Some time between 1119 and 1125 Hong Hao, Paymaster of Xiuzhou [Jiaying], risked his life by diverting the tax rice passing through the

prefecture to save more than 95,000 people. Yang Jizong, an official who served on and off as prefect of Jiaxing for nine years in the late fifteenth century, felt it necessary to stockpile “several million *hu*” of grain. “In the great famine of 1467 and 1468, the people of the prefecture relied on this to preserve their lives.” In a later famine, even these reserves, depleted by allocations to other stricken areas, proved insufficient (JXFZ 1600, 807, 831-32, 887).

13. The text says “more than 1,000 *li*.” Jiaxing prefecture measures about 80 by 60 kilometers, so trying to fit a *length* of about 500 kilometers into it, even a twisting and turning length, makes little sense. If *li* is taken as meaning a “square *li*,” then it is roughly of the order of one quarter of a square kilometer (0.5 x 0.5 kilometers). Hence, “more than 1,000 square *li*” probably indicates an area of the order of 250 km<sup>2</sup>.

14. The drought mentioned in the poem occurred in 1320. Most of these translations use vowel-rhymes on the last stressed syllables of the lines to partially replicate the Chinese full rhymes. The dash is used to indicate a slight break, or caesura, to match the mid-line break commonly found in Chinese verse.

15. For examples, see Elvin 1997, 50, 62, 68-69, 81-82, 86. These are mostly translated from Zhang 1869, 564-70.

16. JXFZ 1600, 1559-60. The phrase “Lord Buddha’s park” refers to the park of the king of Sravasti in which there stood the Jetavana monastery, one of the favored resorts of Shakyamuni. Chinese seem to have found a special inspiration from going up to a high point, and did this at certain times of the year, notably the ninth day of the ninth moon.

17. Liao indicates the Qidan Liao dynasty.

18. Many senior officials under the Mongols came from lands to the west of China. The term “gold” suggests the Jin or Jürchen (Gold) dynasty or, according to one theory, metal, since metal cuts wood, the dominant element adopted by the Qidan (Jin 1981, 137). Thus there might have been a war of symbols.

19. The “tussocked dunes” refer to a sandy area in Shaanxi famous as a grazing-ground for horses, here symbolizing northern invaders. Cranes were the mounts of Chinese “immortals.” The brambles suggest abandoned farms, while the eagles hint at Chinese heroes, and the brave porcupine, believed to stand up to tigers, represents Chinese resistance to foreign occupation.

20. The phrase about “sweating out evil forces” probably refers to the improvement of the soil by the application of fertilizers and perhaps lime.

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## **Chapter 6**

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### **Perpetuating Celestial Order in an Earthly Environment: Astronomy in Mesoamerica around 1000**

**Ivan Šprajc**

Astronomy is one of the oldest sciences (Waerden 1974, 1). The apparently immutable and perfect celestial order must have caught human attention since the remotest past: the objects in the sky move continuously, but their itineraries and velocities are mostly constant and predictable. Moreover, various cyclical changes that are observable in the sky coincide with seasonal changes in the natural environment, but the periodicity of celestial events is much more stable and exact. The perception of these regularities allowed ancient societies to arrange their time and space, to predict annual changes in their environments, to regulate their activities, and to create a coherent view of the surrounding world. In human consciousness, “chaos” was replaced by “cosmos” (Krupp 1983, 1ff, 157ff, 315; Broda 1982, 101).<sup>1</sup>

The antiquity of astronomy, as well as its great importance attested in all ancient civilizations, can be accounted for by its practical uses. The rotational motion of the celestial sphere and the directions in which the objects in the sky rise and set provide basic references for *orientation in space*. On the other hand, the annual movement of the sun, the moon's phases, and the visibility of certain stars and constellations at specific times and seasons allow *orientation in time*. We can recall that important units of time (the day, the month and the year) derive from the cyclical movement of celestial bodies; indeed, the problem of the measurement of time is "peculiarly one of astronomy" (Woolard and Clemence 1966, 326). However, exact astronomical knowledge was not the only result of the observation of the sky. The apparently invariable and perfect celestial order came to be considered superior to the terrestrial and human order; this idea originated in an enormous variety of myths and beliefs about the dependence of the world's events on the phenomena observed in the sky.<sup>2</sup> Astronomical observations, allowing time computations and predictions of seasonal changes in nature, became particularly necessary with the origin of agriculture, because this form of subsistence requires an orderly regulation and planning of activities in the yearly cycle. Consequently, astronomical knowledge acquired great importance in early states, making production strategies more efficient and contributing to the legitimization of power for ruling classes. In this sense, civilizations of Mesoamerica represent no exception (Reyman 1975; Broda 1982, 104f).

Mesoamerica is a culturally defined geographical area, corresponding to the central and southern parts of modern Mexico and the northern part of Central America. Civilizations with a number of common cultural traits flourished there between the second millennium BCE (when the first complex, state-organized societies emerged) and the Spanish conquest in the early sixteenth century. The history of pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica falls into three main periods or evolutionary stages: the Preclassic (*ca.* 2000 BCE-250 CE), the Classic (250-900) and the Postclassic (900-1519). The earliest stratified and urban societies appeared during the Preclassic along the southern part of the Mexican Gulf Coast, in central Mexico and in the Maya area in the Mesoamerican southeast. The greatest splendor, particularly notable in fine arts, architectural achievements and writing systems, appeared during the Classic period. Pronounced militarization, political fragmentation and, in many parts, general cultural decadence characterized the Postclassic.

Around 1000 Mesoamerica witnessed a turbulent period after the collapse of various urban societies that flourished during the Classic period. The eighth-century fall of the powerful and centralized state dominated by Teotihuacan in central Mexico was followed by the emergence of a number of smaller, independent polities. Almost all of the great and splendid urban centers in the central and southern Maya Lowlands were abandoned by the early tenth century. While urban life continued in the northern part of the Yucatan peninsula, the traditional Maya culture blended with foreign elements. In fact, both central Mexican and Maya archaeological sites from the period of the Classic-Postclassic transition reflect migrations and exchanges of ideas between different parts of Mesoamerica. The so-called Putun or Chontal-Maya, inhabitants of the Gulf Coast region that currently belongs to the Mexican states of Veracruz, Tabasco and Campeche, became in this period the leading economic and political force, controlling long-distance trade and exerting ideological influence throughout Mesoamerica. Finally, from the tenth to the twelfth centuries, the most prominent political entities in Mesoamerica were dominated by Tula in central Mexico and Chichén Itzá in the northern part of the Yucatan peninsula (López Austin and López Luján 1999; Brockmann 1999; Brüggemeier and Schenkluhn 2000). Migrations throughout the area and political realignments following the decline of Classic cultures had a profound impact on Mesoamerican culture in general and were reflected also in aspects of worldview and religion related to astronomy.

The ancient Mesoamericans attained a relatively complex knowledge about the regularities of the apparent motion of celestial bodies, and had a wide variety of astronomical concepts and practices (Aveni 2001; Galindo 1994). In this paper I will focus on two aspects of Mesoamerican astronomy for which we have concrete evidence for the centuries around 1000. The observational use of architectural alignments, on the one hand, and the practices and concepts associated with the planet Venus, on the other, underwent changes dated precisely to the Classic-Postclassic transition.

### **Architectural alignments and observational calendars**

Systematic research carried out during the last few decades has revealed that Mesoamerican architectural orientations exhibit a clearly non-random distribution. Civic and ceremonial buildings were largely oriented on the basis of astronomical considerations, particularly to the



sun's position on the horizon on certain dates (Aveni 2001; Aveni and Gibbs 1976; Aveni and Hartung 1986; Tichy 1991; Šprajc 2001a). According to various hypotheses forwarded thus far, one can interpret the dates associated with geographic orientations in terms of their relevance for the agricultural cycle and for computations related to the calendar system. Some authors have also reconstructed possible horizon calendars for particular sites, on the assumption that prominent peaks of the local horizon served as natural markers of sunrises and sunsets on relevant dates (Tichy 1991; Broda 1993; Galindo 1994; Iwaniszewski 1994; Aveni 2001).

Accumulated fieldwork experiences and the feedback generated by attempts at interpretation have revealed that available alignment data have been neither sufficient nor accurate enough for testing specific hypotheses of this kind. I therefore undertook precise measurements of alignments at 37 Preclassic, Classic and Postclassic archaeological sites in central Mexico, taking into account a variety of facts and circumstances not recognized before. I measured not only the orientations of civic-ceremonial structures but also the alignments to prominent peaks on the local horizon, placed within the angle of the annual movement of the sun. The results of my research, exhaustively presented elsewhere (Šprajc 1999; 2000; 2001b), are summarized as follows:

1. The dates of sunrises and sunsets both along architectural orientations and above prominent hills on the local horizon exhibit consistent patterns. At any particular site they are separated by intervals that are predominantly multiples of 13 and 20 days. This is significant because 13- and 20-day intervals were basic periods of the characteristic Mesoamerican calendar cycle of 260 days, known also as the *sacred count*.<sup>3</sup>
2. Since the horizon prominences were measured from the main temple of every site, the patterns of dates and intervals based on these alignment data indicate both the orientation and location of important ceremonial structures according to astronomical principles. The places selected for their construction allowed the employment of surrounding peaks as natural markers of sunrises and sunsets on significant dates. Furthermore, a variety of structures were oriented to prominent peaks on the local horizon.
3. We can interpret the relevance of recurring dates, recorded at a number of sites, in terms of their approximate coincidence with important seasonal changes and corresponding stages of the agricultural cycle. The fact that many alignments mark certain series

of *exactly* the same dates, separated by multiples of 13 and 20 days, suggests the existence of a *ritual* or *canonical* agricultural cycle.

4. The orientations embodied in the monumental architecture of a particular site and the prominent local horizon features allowed the use of an *observational calendar*. In view of the lack of permanent concordance between the calendar and tropical years, observational calendars were necessary for predicting important seasonal changes and for efficient scheduling of corresponding agricultural activities.

The importance of time computing by intervals among ancient Mesoamericans can hardly be exaggerated. Because the calendar year of 365 days did not maintain a fixed correlation with the tropical year of 365.24219 days (Šprajc 2001b: 133ff), a specific date of the tropical year had no permanent calendrical name. It could only be expressed by means of the interval that separated it from an astronomically identifiable moment, e.g. a solstice. The intervals equivalent to basic periods of the formal calendar and their multiples were obviously much easier to handle than arbitrary periods. Sunrises and sunsets separated by 13-day intervals and their multiples occurred on the dates with the same numeral, while the events separated by 20-day periods and their multiples fell on the dates that had the same sign of the 260-day count.<sup>4</sup>

The most frequently recorded dates, falling around February 10, May 1, August 10 and November 1, correspond to the so-called 17°-family of alignments. Skewed approximately 17° clockwise from cardinal directions, these alignments involve two slightly different groups which coexisted not only at Teotihuacan, where this alignment family is supposed to have originated (Aveni and Gibbs 1976, 510), but also at other sites (Šprajc 2001b). The alignments of the first group, visible at the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan and the central section of the Acropolis at Xochicalco, recorded sunrises on February 12 and October 30 and sunsets on April 30 and August 13. The distance is 260 days both from February 12 to October 30 and from August 13 to April 30. This interval, corresponding to the length of the sacred calendrical cycle, must have determined this alignment group: the sunrises or sunsets separated by an interval of 260 days occurred on the *same dates of the sacred count*. The dates recorded by the second group tend to be February 9, May 3, August 11 and November 1, corresponding to the orientations of the Ciudadela at Teotihuacan and of the eastern and western sections of the Acropolis at Xochicalco (Šprajc 2000; 2001b). The coexistence of the two alignment groups at both sites suggests that their astronomical functions were interrelated. Indeed, the two corresponding series of dates permit reconstruction of two variants of

observational calendar that could have been in use simultaneously (Table 1).

Table 1. Two observational calendar schemes reconstructed on the basis of the two groups of alignments of the 17° family. The dates and intervening intervals of each scheme are to be read in a counterclockwise direction.

Scheme 1

| Date   | Interval<br>(days) | Date   |
|--------|--------------------|--------|
| Feb 12 | 105                | Oct 30 |
| May 3  | 80    80           | Aug 11 |
|        | 100                |        |

Scheme 2

| Date   | Interval<br>(days) | Date   |
|--------|--------------------|--------|
| Feb 9  | 100                | Nov 1  |
| Apr 30 | 80    80           | Aug 13 |
|        | 105                |        |

Scheme 1 combines “winter” dates of the first series (February 12 and October 30) with “summer” dates of the second one (May 3 and August 11). Scheme 2 incorporates “winter” dates of the second series (February 9 and November 1) and “summer” dates of the first one (April 30 and August 13). In both schemes a cycle of 260 days (from February 12 to October 30 in Scheme 1, and from August 13 to April 30 in Scheme 2) is subdivided by multiples of 20 days.<sup>5</sup>

The observational function proposed above for the 17°-family alignments is based on material vestiges that remain *in situ*, and is also supported by ethnographic evidence (Šprajc 2001b, 111ff). The dates registered by the two alignment groups, although perhaps not all equally important, probably marked four critical moments in the maize cultivation cycle corresponding to preparatory works on cultivated lands (February), the onset of the rainy season and the time for planting (around May 1), the ripening of the first corn cobs in some areas

(August), and the end of the rainy season and the beginning of harvest (around November 1) (Iwaniszewski 1991). It is noteworthy, however, that practically the same declinations (dates) are recorded by alignments at a number of sites (by both architectural orientations and prominent mountains on the local horizon), even in ecologically different zones, and that traditional festivities with predominantly agricultural symbolism are still celebrated in indigenous Mesoamerican communities around February 10, May 1, August 10 and November 1 (Broda 1993; Šprajc 2001b, 84ff, 107ff). This suggests the existence of a ritual or canonical agricultural cycle; the dates involved must have been canonized precisely because the intervals separating them were easy to handle by means of the 260-day calendar count. The 17°-family alignments must have marked ritually important dates in the maize cultivation cycle, whereas the determination of exact times for initiating the corresponding agricultural works depended on a variety of other, mostly practical considerations related to specific environmental circumstances (for interesting ethnographic analogies, see Zeilik 1985).

The motive for the simultaneous use of the two observational schemes presented in Table 1 is not readily apparent. Possibly the alignments of the two groups allowed greater reliability in determining the most relevant days with precision. If cloudy weather made it impossible to fix a date by means of direct observations along a particular alignment, the date could have been determined instead by prediction, based on the record of dates marked previously by other alignments and knowing the structure of intervals involved in the observational calendar. In general, the distribution of dates corresponding to architectural orientations and prominent peaks on the local horizon of central Mexican archaeological sites seems to reflect precisely this concern for determining significant moments of the year with due anticipation.

The alignments of the 17° family are widespread all over Mesoamerica and were in use from the first century up to the Spanish conquest. They were present around the year 1000 in Tula (Šprajc 2001, 280ff). However, some other dates frequently recorded by alignments suggest that different versions of ceremonial agricultural cycle were employed, probably as a result of differing environmental circumstances, cultural idiosyncrasies, and even political ambitions of ruling elites. A change in alignments is notable around 1000 with the appearance of an orientation group particularly common in Postclassic central Mexico. Skewed about 10° to 13° south of east (or north of west), these alignments record sunrises around February 21 and October 21 and sunsets around April 20 and August 22. The earliest

orientations of this group known so far are incorporated in several structures dated between the tenth and the twelfth centuries at Teotenango, a large Postclassic archaeological site in the Valley of Toluca, west of Mexico City. Numerous later structures possess similar orientations, e.g. the Temple of Ehecatl at Tlatelolco; the pyramids of Los Reyes and Cerro de la Estrella within Mexico City; the structure of San Marcos at Huexotla, east of the Mexican capital; the causeway of the sanctuary on Mount Tláloc, east of the Basin of Mexico; and the late phase of the Palace at Yauhtepec, in the state of Morelos south of Mexico City. The observational calendars reconstructed for this orientation group do not reflect a scheme of dates and intervals as clear and uniform as the one corresponding to the alignments of the 17° group. At Yauhtepec (See Table 2), Los Reyes and Mount Tláloc the intervals of 130 ( $10 \times 13$ ) days seem to have been important. The dates recorded at Teotenango and Huexotla were slightly different: the long intervals were rather 120 ( $6 \times 20$ ) days, whereas the short intervals tended to be either 52 ( $4 \times 13$ ) days or 60 ( $3 \times 20$ ) days (Šprajc 2001b).<sup>6</sup>

Table 2. Possible observational calendar for the late construction stage of the Palace at Yauhtepec, Morelos, Mexico. The dates and intervening intervals are to be read in the counterclockwise direction.

| Alignment       | Date     | Interval<br>(days) | Date   |
|-----------------|----------|--------------------|--------|
| Palace, sunrise | Feb 24   | 130                | Oct 17 |
| Palace, sunset  | April 17 | 52      53         | Aug 25 |
|                 |          | 130                |        |

It seems likely that the orientations of this group also marked the dates of a canonical or ritual agricultural cycle. Since these dates are very close to those recorded by the 17°-group of alignments, and considering that the latter group persists up to the Spanish conquest, it can be argued that the new alignment tradition, rather than reflecting a climatic change around the Classic-Postclassic transition, was an ideologically based innovation imposed by emerging political leaderships.

## **Architectural alignments and the planet Venus**

The importance of Venus in Mesoamerica, as well as in other ancient cultures, can be explained by its brilliance: after the sun and the moon, this planet is the third most luminous object in the sky. By the Classic period, the Mesoamericans had accumulated a considerable amount of exact knowledge about the regularities of its apparent motion. Assigning 584 days to its synodic period, they realized that 5 synodic revolutions of the planet equal 8 calendrical years. The equation is quite exact, considering that the calendrical years had invariably 365 days ( $8 \times 365 = 5 \times 584 = 2,920$ ). The recognition of this relationship is attested in several pre-Hispanic codices that contain the so-called Venus tables. The example in the Dresden Codex, a Postclassic Maya manuscript, is particularly explicit and reveals also that the Maya were aware of the error accumulated over longer periods. Since the exact length of the planet's synodic period is 583.92 days, the difference between the dates of observable Venus phenomena (like first and last appearances after conjunctions) and those predicted by the table amounted to 5.2 days in 104 years, which is the total span covered by the table. However, the correction mechanisms given in the introductory information allowed the occasional elimination of this error, so that the table could be used again from the beginning (Lounsbury 1983; Šprajc 1996b, 50ff).

A number of beliefs surrounded the planet Venus in Mesoamerica. Most famous is its malevolent aspect: according to some written sources from post-conquest central Mexico, the morning star at its first appearance after inferior conjunction was believed to inflict harm on nature and mankind in a number of ways. Iconographic elements in various codices corroborate these reports. However, while the heliacal rises of the morning star were certainly important, the evening star probably had even greater significance. A statistically significant number of dates in Maya monumental inscriptions, accompanied by "star" glyphs or related symbols, correspond to characteristic moments of Venus' synodic period, mostly to the first appearances of the evening star after its invisibility around superior conjunction. The events associated with these dates are predominantly raids, captures and enthronements (Aveni and Hotaling 1994). Furthermore, as the results of recent studies show, the most important beliefs about Venus must have been those relating the planet to rain, maize and fertility; the evening star occupied a prominent place in these concepts (Šprajc 1993a; 1993b; 1996a; 1996b).

We can trace the Venus-rain-maize conceptual relationship attested in iconography back to the Classic and, possibly, even to the Preclassic period. Around 1000, however, a novel version of Venus cult, amalgamating elements from central Mexico and the Maya area, developed in the southern part of the Mexican Gulf Coast and propagated throughout Mesoamerica. The Gulf Coast was the place of origin of the feathered serpent and the wind god, both associated with Venus. It was there that both deities, by the early Postclassic, fused into a complex god known among the later Nahuatl-speakers as Quetzalcoatl, who figured as the most prominent personification of the so-called Venus-rain-maize complex. The inhabitants of the region working as long-distance traders and warriors, commonly labeled the Putun or Chontal Maya (whose culture and probably also ethnic composition was a mixture of central Mexican and Mayan elements), were responsible for the diffusion of the new Quetzalcoatl cult. It was associated with the ritual ball game and the characteristic round temples of Gulf Coast origin, which spread to other Mesoamerican regions by the early Postclassic (Šprajc 1993b; 1996a; 1996b). The fact that the base date of the Venus table in the Dresden Codex falls in 934 (Lounsbury 1983) may also reflect changes related to the concept of the planet Venus that occurred around the tenth century.

A characteristic feature of the new worship seems to be embedded in architectural alignments referring to Venus extremes on the horizon. The rising and setting points of the planet move along the horizon, reaching northerly and southerly extremes that are seasonally fixed. Particularly interesting are the extremes attained by the evening star: when visible in the western sky after sunset, Venus always reaches its northernmost setting point between April and mid-June (before the summer solstice) and its extreme southerly setting point between October and mid-December (before the winter solstice). Since the rainy season in Mesoamerica lasts generally from May to October, it has been argued that the main observational base of the Venus-rain-maize conceptual relationship, in which the evening manifestation of the planet had a prominent role, was precisely the coincidence of the evening star extremes with the two annual climatic changes conditioning a proper development of the agricultural cycle. In one cycle of five synodic periods or eight years, five northerly and five southerly extremes of the evening star can be observed, but they are of different magnitudes. The maximum extremes, occurring once in an eight-year cycle, are greater than the maximum extremes of the morning star (Šprajc 1993a; 1993b; 1996a, 23ff, 127ff; 1996b, 32ff, 169ff).

While the orientations in Mesoamerican architecture are predominantly solar (Šprajc 2001a; 2001b), several alignments to Venus extremes have also been identified. Taking into account the asymmetry of visible morning and evening star extremes, one can ascertain that all Venus orientations known so far refer to the maximum extremes of the evening star. Interestingly, they all date to the terminal Classic and early Postclassic periods. Probably the most illuminating example is found at Uxmal, the famous Maya site in the northern part of the Yucatan peninsula. The structure known as the Palace of the Governor, built around 900, was oriented to the maximum northerly extreme of Venus as evening star. The idea that this alignment was intentional has iconographic support: more than 350 Venus glyphs are still visible in the decoration of the Palace's façade. The northerly extremes of Venus heralded the beginning of the rainy season, so it is significant that the glyphs are placed in the cheeks of the masks of the rain god Chac. Furthermore, the Chac masks are arranged in groups of five, whereas eight stylized double-headed serpents are set in the decoration above the central doorway, and the numeral eight in Maya dot-bar notation appears above the eyes of the Chac masks at both northern corners of the Palace. Recall that these are Venus numbers *par excellence*, considering the commensurability, well known to the Maya, of five synodic periods of the planet and eight calendar years (Šprajc 1993a, 45ff; 1996a, 72ff; 1996b, 170ff).

The inhabitants of Mesoamerica since relatively remote times must have considered Venus one of the agents responsible for a proper distribution of rainfall in the yearly cycle. A particular concern for the evening star extremes, manifested in the terminal Classic and early Postclassic architectural orientations, might reflect climatic changes and consequent environmental stress in the late first millennium. Severe droughts occurring in Mesoamerica between the sixth and the tenth centuries, and peaking between 800 and 1000, may have contributed substantially to the collapse of the Classic Lowland Maya civilization and to general demographic, economic and political crises attested in Mesoamerica at the time of the Classic-Postclassic transition (Hodell et al. 1995; Sabloff 1995; Fagan 1999, 139ff). The terminal Classic and early Postclassic florescence in the northern part of the Yucatan peninsula reveals that the societies in that area were capable of coping with environmental strains, but apparently were also well aware of their dependence on the precarious rainfall pattern. Their concern seems to be reflected not only in the appearance of the alignments to Venus extremes but also in the masks of the rain god Chac, which



became the most prolific and typical decorative elements precisely in the terminal Classic architectural styles of northern Yucatan.

## Conclusion

The alignments in the ancient Mesoamerican architecture and cultural landscape predominantly referred to the sun's positions on the horizon and allowed the use of observational calendars necessary for predicting important seasonal changes in the natural environment and for scheduling the corresponding agricultural labors. Even if the alignments served practical ends, their function cannot be viewed solely as utilitarian; for the purposes of observational calendars, it was not necessary to build monumental structures on carefully selected places and to orient them in the required directions. In fact, astronomical knowledge, rather than resulting from observations along architectural alignments, was a *prerequisite* for orienting and locating buildings in accordance with the principles of observational calendars. Furthermore, Venus extremes have little practical application for orientation in time, since they are not annual phenomena and do not occur constantly on the same dates of the tropical year. The alignments, just like other types of evidence, clearly show that Mesoamerican astronomy, in spite of its practical functions, was embedded in ritual and intimately related to social organization, religion and ideology in pre-Hispanic societies.

Mesoamericans observed the parallelism between the movement of celestial bodies and the alternation of seasonal changes, and realized that the intervals of recurrence of astronomical phenomena are much more constant and precise than the intervals separating other cyclical phenomena observable in nature. They thus considered the sky to be the image of divine perfection and supreme order to which human and earthly order was subordinated. Celestial bodies were, therefore, deified, and the directions to certain positions of the sun and Venus on the horizon, representing a spatial materialization of the corresponding moments of the tropical year, also became sacred. Consequently, an astronomically and calendrically significant orientation must have contributed to the sanctification of the building, because it symbolically reproduced the divine celestial order (Broda 1982, 101f; Aveni and Hartung 1986, 8; Krupp 1983; Wheatley 1971). We can interpret the astronomical orientations of ceremonial structures and some residences of rulers who claimed to be god-men responsible for a proper development of natural cycles (López Austin 1973; Houston and Stuart

1996) as attempts by Mesoamericans to recreate celestial principles and to perpetuate cosmic harmony in their earthly environment.

## Notes

1. No wonder that the Greek term *κόσμος* came to be used as a synonym for “universe,” even if its original meaning was simply “order.” It is precisely the sky that represents the order *par excellence*; we could say that the sky figured in the human mind as a prototype of order.

2. In a particular social group, the “scientific” or exact and “non-scientific” concepts are normally intertwined, composing a relatively coherent worldview, comprehensible only if examined as a whole and in the light of its natural, social and historical context. Both correct and false ideas may thus shed light on a number of aspects of the society being studied (Ruggles 1999, 80f, 155). This holistic approach has been adopted by archaeoastronomy, a relatively new anthropological discipline whose endeavors are focused upon all those segments of archaeologically documented societies that have some relationship to the observation of the sky.

3. Any date of the sacred cycle was a combination of a number from 1 to 13 and a sign in the series of 20. All possible combinations of the 13 numerals and 20 signs occurred in 260 days.

4. The importance of intervalic time reckoning is attested both in central Mexican (Siarkiewicz 1995) and Maya codices (Aveni et al. 1995; 1996). The mechanics of the 260-day count even nowadays remain familiar to indigenous calendar-keepers in the Guatemala highlands, who use no written records; the knowledge possessed and the procedures employed by pre-Hispanic full-time specialists must have been far more sophisticated (Šprajc 2001b, 91ff, 151ff).

5. These intervals were not immutable, of course, because their sum is 365, while the length of the tropical year is 365.24219 days. The difference accumulated between the tropical year and the year composed of “ideal” intervals periodically resulted in a one-day increment of one or another interval and, consequently, in a shift in the sequence of dates recorded by the alignments and constant during a period of approximately four years. Presumably all observational calendars based on alignments “functioned” in a comparable way, making it possible to monitor the slippage of the calendar year with respect to the tropical year.

6. The intended dates and intervals corresponding to this orientation group cannot always be accurately determined, because the present state of preservation of several structures does not allow their orientations to be measured with sufficient precision.

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## **Part II**

### **Regimes of production and exchange**



## Chapter 7

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### **Minting, Silver Routes and Mining in Europe: Economic Expansion and Technical Innovation**

**Heiko Steuer**

#### **Various monetary economies in Europe**

Around the year 1000, Europe north of the Alps was split into two large areas of currency. West of the river Elbe, in the German Empire, in France and in England the coin-based monetary system was predominant, i.e. silver coins (*denar* and *pfennig*) were counted out when buying and selling. East of the Elbe, among the Slavs and the Scandinavians (Vikings), merchants developed the so-called weight-based monetary system, i.e. during transactions they weighed out silver with the help of balances and weights. In the east, therefore, it did not matter in what form silver was available; ingots, pieces of jewelry or coins could be cut to size (as “hacksilver”) and weighed according to



the necessary amount (Spufford 1988). Figures 1-3 illustrate the boundaries between the coin-based and the weight-based currency regimes. Scales and weights determined the amount of coins or hacksilver exchanged to defray transactions east of the Elbe River, in regions of the north settled by Scandinavians, and in the British Isles.

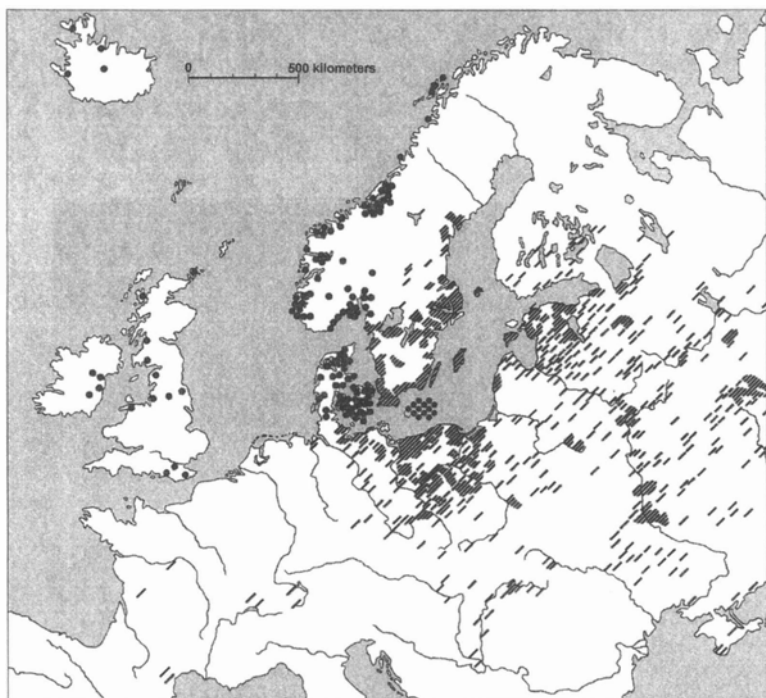


Figure 1. Dirhems in eastern and northern Europe. Slashes indicate areas with common distribution and high numbers of silver hoards including dirhems. Dots indicate single find places of hoards with dirhams (Steuer 1987).

Arabic silver coins (*dirhem*) were known in the German realm. In the tenth century, the Jewish-Arab merchant Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub, also known as al-Tartushi, journeyed from the Iberian peninsula through central Europe to the Baltic Sea (a trip preserved in the geographical lexicon of the Persian writer al-Qazwini). Twice, in 961 and 962, the traveller met Otto the Great on the way, in Magdeberg and in Rome. He reported (Steuer 2000, 520) that during his sojourn in Mainz he found dirhems from the coinage of Samarkand, in present-day

Uzbekistan, with the names of rulers and dates of minting. He dated them to Hijra years 301 and 302 (corresponding to the 913/14 and 914/15). Al-Tartushi said, "I hold them to be coins of the Samanid Nasr ibn Ahmed," who reigned from 914 to 943.<sup>1</sup>

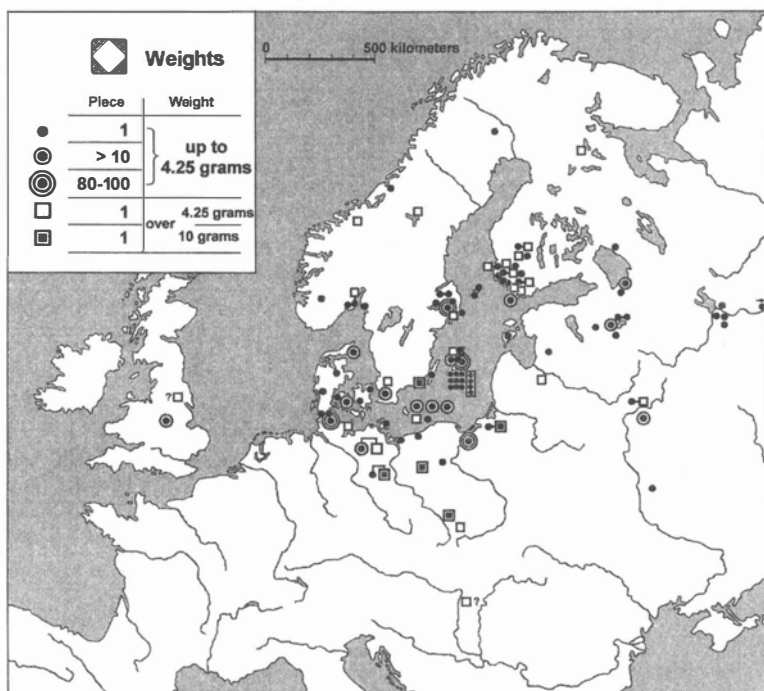


Figure 2. Distribution of the so-called cubo-octahedric commercial weights of the Viking age (Steuer et al. 2002, 139)

The European economy, experiencing expanding trade, a growing network of market places and the development of cities, had a large demand for silver. In the western states the existing volume of circulation was insufficient for coinage, and mining activities abandoned in late Antiquity but resumed by the Carolingians around the year 800 had not yet yielded adequate amounts. It was necessary to import metal from the caliphates. The most important influx of silver into Europe came from the east. Metal analyses have indicated that dirhems from the Samanids of Central Asia reached the Ottonian Empire in Germany, where they were melted down and re-minted into denars. For Northern and Eastern Europe, silver came from the west by

way of trade, as loot, and as tribute. Silver from the caliphate based in Baghdad flowed to the north via Russia in the form of Kufic dirhems; the slave trade moving captives south was the economic motor.

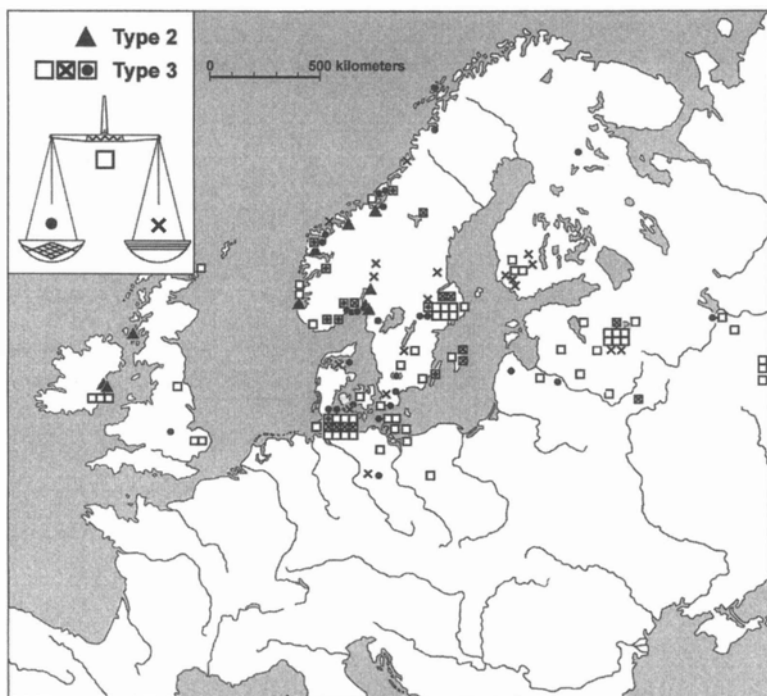


Figure 3. Distribution of weighing instruments from the tenth century (Steuer 1997, 21 ff), mostly broken or incomplete, with signs of different workshops. Inset symbols indicate types of beams and ornamentation on the scales.

During the tenth century the influence of Central Asia was so great that the lands of Eastern Europe and Scandinavia became almost Islamicized. This affected not only the economic sector, demonstrated by an astonishing number of Arab dirhems, but also the sphere of everyday life, discernible in numerous additional influences on clothing, weaponry and a variety of commodities. The Bulgar realm on the middle Volga River had already gone over to the religion of Islam, and they were minting some coins according to the models of Baghdad and Central Asia.

In both the coin-based and the weight-based systems, a high purity of always more than 95 percent backed up silver currency. During political disturbances in Central Asia, when the coins in the Samanid Empire were massively devalued during the late tenth century, with at least 10 percent and sometimes more than 20 percent copper content, people in Europe would not accept them. The result was a serious lack of silver, particularly as the aggressive Vikings pressed high tributes from western states such as Anglo-Saxon England; the north had turned to providing itself with silver from the west, and not primarily from Central Asia anymore. This was an immediate cause for the reactivation of mining throughout the German Empire. Written sources refer to new mines in many areas of the Empire around the year 1000, including the Harz Mountains (968), the Vosges Mountains (984), and the Black Forest (1028). In this way, the innovations in the economy of Europe, including new mines and flourishing cities, mirror the changes in long-distance contacts between Europe and the Islamic world stretching from the Iberian Peninsula to Central Asia.

### **Precondition: The economic reform of the year 800**

The turning toward silver and away from gold had already occurred two centuries earlier when new silver coins, so-called denars or pfennigs, were introduced in the Carolingian Empire. This task was undertaken under royal control and was a direct reaction to “global” changes in trade and commerce.

Caliph Abd al-Malik (reigned 685-705) had already conducted a coinage reform in 696/697 and created a new currency for the Islamic world: a gold dinar with a weight of 4.25 grams, a silver dirhem with a weight of 2.97 grams, and copper coins as the smallest denomination. The dirhem became the standard currency for international trade and commerce. The total income of the caliphate by the year 800 is supposed to have amounted to the incredible sum of 400 million dirhems, a volume that, if accurate, would equal 25 times the global silver production for the year 1500. In the ninth century, the viceroy of Khurasan raised taxes in the range of 40 to 50 million dirhems per year, which would equal 120 to 150 tons of silver. To partially meet this demand, the Central Asian silver mines of Tashkent alone yielded an output of 30 tons of silver per year (Lombard 1975).

Before the caliphate shifted to a solid silver currency, gold had then been the metal for coins in the Byzantine Empire and the Germanic polities in the territories of the former Roman Empire, including the

Merovingian Empire of the Franks. Gold had characterized a special type of economy based not so much on smaller denominations for everyday trading, but rather on payments of considerable amounts among higher social levels. Such payments included salaries of mercenaries, tributes to neighbouring states and peoples (Byzantium paid enormous amounts to the Germans, Huns, Avars and Bulgarians), and exchanges within a system of diplomatic gifts. As a rule, gold came from Africa to the Mediterranean Sea and through the Byzantine Empire into Frankish territory. Local mining in Western Europe was negligible; people had washed most of the gold out of river sands and melted down old reserves for re-use.

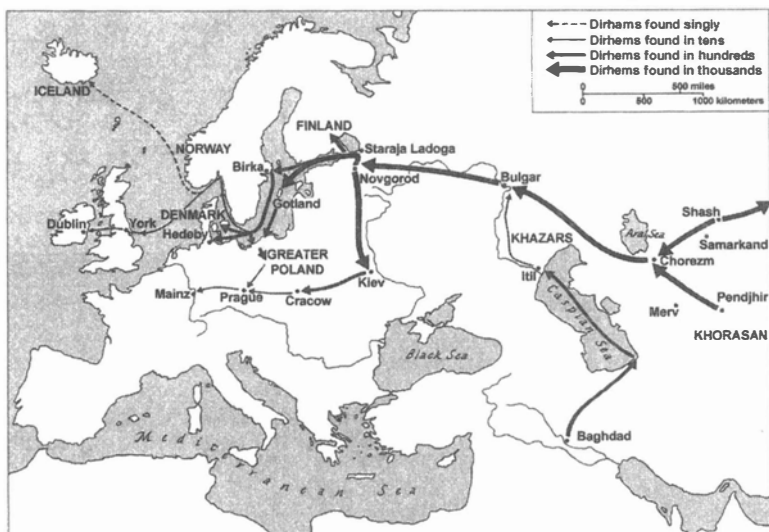


Figure 4. Samanid-Viking silver routes, reconstructed from the size of dirhem hoards (Spufford 1988, Map 7)

In the heavy and valuable *solidus* and *triens* of the Merovingian realm, during the seventh century gold became progressively replaced by an admixture of silver – a loss in value that enabled use in the marketplace. This was the background for the widespread coinage reforms of the Carolingians following their official accession to the throne. Pepin (reigned 751-768) and Charlemagne (reigned 768-814) exchanged the nominally valid gold currency with a silver currency that had proven effective within the caliphate. An edict in 755 declared that 264 coins, now called denars, had to be struck from one pound of silver; this resulted in 1.24 grams of silver for one denar, with one

pound set at 327.45 grams.<sup>2</sup> A currency was now again available for the purchase of everyday goods and produce at a market, with which one could pay dues and taxes to one's lord. If the transaction was very small, one could cut the denar in half or even in quarters. Further reforms undertaken by Charlemagne reduced the weight of the denar so that soon the average weight of the coins was barely 1 gram (i.e. three Carolingian denars were approximately equivalent to one dirhem from the caliphate).

Leading authorities had recognized that a practical coin-based currency system based on silver was a requirement for flourishing trade and a market economy, and the highest political circles of Western Europe engaged in a widespread discussion of the coinage reforms. Charlemagne wrote on this matter to King Offa of Mercia (757/58-796), who calibrated the silver currency in his English realm to Carolingian silver coins, first with a weight of 1.3 grams, later with 1 gram. Before that time, the various trading centers in the English kingdoms and those surrounding the North Sea, such as Friesian Dorestad or Danish Ribe, had issued their own silver coins, the so-called *sceattas*.

The continuing and rapid growth in population, commercial activities, production, market and trade joined with non-economic demands for non-ferrous metals used in art works for clerical and royal settings, where large-scale statues, sumptuous portals, and liturgical tools with representational values were needed in ever growing numbers. But if total demand was rapidly escalating, the reserves of silver were diminishing, due not only to their fixation in clerical objects and mundane splendour, but rather more because of the minting of coins.

### **Amounts and flows of silver**

Beginning in the ninth century, the Vikings started to extort silver as tribute from the kingdom of England. This so-called Danegeld amounted to 206,000 pounds of silver for the period between 991 and 1018, or more than 50 million pennies in approximately 30 years. That meant an average of 5 to 10 tons of silver every year taken out of the local economy in England, requiring replenishment through mining.

Enormous amounts of silver also flowed from the German Empire into Scandinavia and the Baltic countries in these decades. Through the analysis of the various components of silver hoards (ingots, jewelry and coins) dating to around the year 1000, we can discover the countries

and cities that provided precious metals for the north. Numismatists have even coined the term *Fernhandelsdenar* (long-distance trading denars) to describe the German coins produced mainly for export to the north and east, whereas few discoveries of these coins have occurred within the boundaries of the German Empire. The hoarding phenomenon in northern Europe resulted from an abundant influx of precious metals within a local economy that was still very limited, leading possessors to constantly withdraw coins from circulation.

Archaeologists conservatively assume that every found and documented object has to be multiplied by a factor of at least 1,000 in order to reach an estimate for the total objects in circulation. In Swedish treasure troves of the tenth century, 80,000 dirhems have been discovered, which may represent a total of 240 tons of silver from the caliphates. To this impressive figure we must add 85,000 German coins representing 85 tons of silver, as well as 35,000 English coins totalling 35 tons of silver. The 48,000 German coins (mostly minted under the Saxon Ottonian dynasty, hence called *Sachsenpfennige*) discovered in Poland represent another 48 tons of silver, while the Baltic region and Russia have yielded 50,000 German coins representing 50 tons (Hatz 1974, 65-66). We thus arrive at an estimate for the Baltic Sea region of 240 tons of silver coming directly from the Islamic world, in addition to 218 tons minted in Western and Central Europe.

What was the situation within the German Empire? It is reported that the court of Otto the Great issued approximately 30 pounds of silver every day, amounting to over 10,000 pounds of silver in one year. We can assume a total annual income of 65,000 pounds of silver from the cities, imperial and Italian possessions of the Hohenstaufen emperors. The largest mint in the empire, that of the archbishop of Cologne, issued 2 million pfennigs per year, or approximately 2 to 3 tons of silver coins. These not inconsiderable figures, of course, pale in comparison with estimates attributed to the contemporary Islamic world (Steuer 1997, 1998; Steuer et al. 2002).

### **The growing demand for silver: New mines**

The first conclusive written reference to an intensification of mining in Northern Europe designated the Harz Mountains. Widukind of Corvey, in his history of the Saxons, mentioned that veins of silver had been opened in their land (*terra Saxonia venas argenti aperit*) in 968, during the reign of Otto the Great (936-973). Thietmar of Merseburg,

the chronicler of the early eleventh century who described the reign of Otto the Great as a Golden Age, wrote, "Here [in Saxony] a silver mine was discovered for the first time" (*Apud nos inventa est primum vera argenti*). Scholars have suggested that this phrase refers to ores from the Rammelsberg, close to Goslar, although mainly copper ores crop out here, and the silver contained within the polyferrous ores can only be won through complex methods of smelting. Recent research has proven, in the meantime, that veins in the upper and western Harz regions close to Gittelde were exploited since the tenth century, so Thietmar's report probably referred to these deposits. In 965, Otto the Great granted an official mint (*publica moneta*) and a market to Gittelde as well. Furthermore, contemporary smelting installations have been discovered archaeologically in nearby Babenhausen.

The Ottonians with their palatinates surrounding the Harz had a large number of coins minted, the so-called *Sachsenpfennige* and *Otto-Adelheid* coins, the latter referring to Adelheid, the mother of Otto III (984-1002) who conducted imperial affairs from 984 to 994, when most of the denars were struck. Analyses of the silver have shown that a part of these coins was minted not from silver of the Harz, but rather from foreign metals. It is likely that tenth-century dirhems from Central Asia were still coming through Russia and the Baltic Sea to the German Empire, where they were melted down and re-minted.

Otto III and his advisors were important supporters of silver mining. One of his documents dating to 984 mentions silver mines in the region of Saint Marie aux Mines in the Vosges Mountains. It is recorded that the Emperor donated his local possessions as a gift to the church of St. Cyriak in Sulzburg in the Southern Black Forest in 993. The walls of this church, which we know existed in the tenth century (Dendrochronology has dated wood in its bell tower to 996), contain mortar with refuse from stamping mills, mainly fluorite from neighbouring washery heaps. Silver mining therefore predates the year 1000 in the Black Forest. An informative document concerning this landscape comes from the year 1028, when Emperor Konrad II (1024-1039) entrusted silver mines in the Black Forest to the Bishop of Basle. Additional information comes from the place names where mines were in operation, e.g. Badenweiler and Sulzburg.

Evidence points to a direct connection between mining and the minting of coins. Mines are mentioned as suppliers for mints from the Kraichgau region in southwest Germany, an area that has yielded for archaeologists the incredible amount of 300,000 tons of slag in spoil heaps. A silver mine and market place appear in the possessions of the monastery in Lorsch for the year 1090; the monastery received taxes in



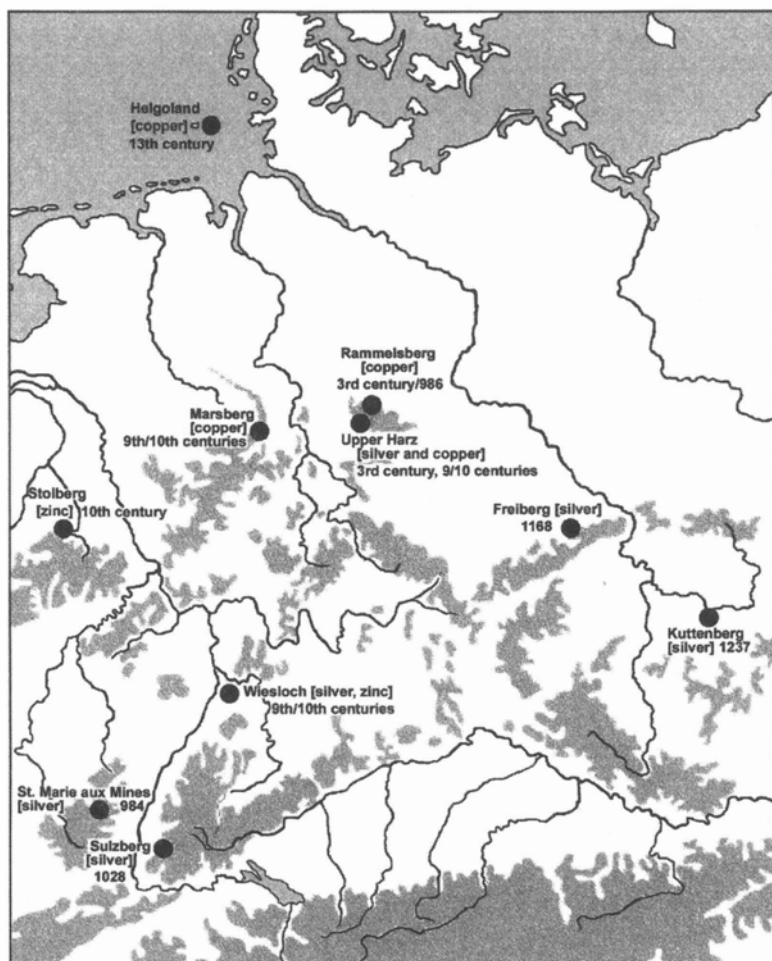


Figure 5. Central European ore deposits mentioned in written sources  
(Steuer 1993, 77)

the form of silver marks. The abbot of Lorsch had been granted a market in Wiesloch by Otto the Great in 965, the same year as the grant for Gittelde in the Harz Mountains.

New mines opened all over Central Europe in the decades following the year 1000: Marsberg in Westphalia (copper), Stolberg by Aachen (zinc ore used for brass), the Erz Mountains close to Freiberg (silver),

Kuttenberg (Kutná Hora) in Bohemia, Slovakia (silver), and Schwaz in Austria (silver). Due to the interests of German rulers in the southern parts of the Empire, mines in Italy (especially Tuscany) also played an important role.

### **The change around the year 1000: A surge in innovation**

Newly arisen political systems, the kingdoms in Scandinavia and Poland, started to mint their own coins around the year 1000 (Malmer 1997). These states thereby established themselves in the European economic structure with coinage systems stabilized in the kingdoms of England, France and the German Empire two centuries earlier.

The total volume of commerce had risen sharply up to the year 1000. Some estimates propose that towards the end of the tenth century the scope of trade had become ten times larger than that of the Carolingian Age (Bielfeldt and Herrmann 1985, 143). The large amount of silver underlying the monetary economy through the flow of dirhems and denars, along with the presence of new mines, demonstrates quantitatively and qualitatively the scale of this important economic upturn. The factors supporting the phenomenon extended far beyond European political boundaries to include constant contacts with the Islamic world on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea, in Southwest Asia, and in Central Asia. But local political-military intervention was also necessary. The stream of silver, amounting to several hundred tons, was enabled through the support of the kings who supported the winning of the ores.

One should not forget, however, that the slave trade was among the businesses that yielded the highest profits in the year 1000. For centuries, slaves from the Slavic territories had been transported via border trading towns such as Magdeberg through Christian lands toward Constantinople or toward the Iberian Peninsula, mainly to be sold to the Emirate of Cordoba. Even in 1168, a sale of some 700 slaves on a single day took place in the market of Mecklenburg by Wismar (Bielfeldt and Herrmann 1985, 141).

One would imagine that a surge in innovation, recognisable in the flows of silver and new mines, would have had determinative influence on the foundations and developments of northern European cities. But this was not the case. Following the decline of the Roman urban culture in Europe north of the Alps, municipal life and economy had already begun anew in the Carolingian Age around 800. The change in the economy of the year 1000 was therefore the result of an economic

expansion that had already lasted for two hundred years in Europe. Cities continuously developed past the change of the millennium, into the high Middle Ages; they grew in size and numbers of inhabitants and manifested greater diversity in inner structure, supporting a wave of new city foundations after 1200. On the other hand, one can see around the year 1000 the accumulation of the potential strength for an accelerated pace of urban development in subsequent centuries.

## Notes

1. The relative value between gold and silver was 12 to 1 at that point in time. The amount of gold for an old golden solidus with a weight of 4.55 grams was thus equivalent to 54.6 grams of silver. The relative commercial value of a solidus to a denar was between 1:50 and 1:60, between a triens and a denar still at a rate of at least 1:15 to 1:20.

2. The Persian dynasty of the Samanids ruled in Transoxiana from 874 to 999, and during the reign of Nasr II brought most of Persia under their power.

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## **Chapter 8**

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### **Interdependencies between the Military and the Economy in the Near East and Egypt**

**Gerhard Hoffmann**

Among the problems on the year 1000 that deserve global comparison, one question concerns tendencies that already marked a regional shift in the center of gravity. Of course, any such comparison encounters a number of difficulties resulting not least from terminology and perspectives of the different relevant sources. Nevertheless, it may be useful to provide our debate with some reflections on the kind of obstacles and/or stimulation to long-term change which grew from interdependencies of the military and the economy in the Islamic Near East and Egypt.

Many works of medieval Arab historians show that in the tenth and eleventh centuries the military represented an important social factor in Islamic regions:

- In the Abbasid caliphate with its capital at Baghdad in Iraq, commanders of praetorian guards had gained such a strong position that they could change caliphs almost at will after the first half of the tenth century. From the middle of the century, emirs from the Iranian Buyid dynasty took over the control of state affairs, allowing the caliphs to exercise only symbolic functions as heads of the Sunni community.
- The new Shi'ite caliphs of the Fatimid dynasty from Ifriqiya/Tunisia moved in the year 969 to finally conquer Egypt with an army of about 100,000 warriors.
- In those large parts of the Iberian peninsula forming the Islamic Andalus at the end of the tenth century, the senior chamberlain Ibn Abi Amir al-Mansur (Almanzor) used his command of the military to isolate the Umayyad caliphs and lead numerous campaigns against Christian sovereigns.
- On the eastern flank of the Islamic world, in Afghanistan, commanders of Turkish origin founded the dynasty of the Ghaznavids, who under Mahmud of Ghazni carried out campaigns into northern India until 1024 (Haarmann 1987, 130ff, 160ff, 275ff; Bosworth 1963).

Historical examples such as these still contribute to a discussion about the medieval "militarization" of the Islamic state (Lambton 1965; Madelung 1997, 326ff). In this debate, the origins of such a militarization are sometimes traced back to the history of the early caliphate. According to this view, the transformation of Islam into an instrument of state power during the seventh century resulted in a repressive social control and eventually military-dominated tendencies. Especially for the period between the middle of the tenth and eleventh centuries, it is not unusual to find assertions that a transformation from civilian political circles to the military found its expression in a radical new distribution of all economic resources (Bianquis 1986, 33).

At the outset, a more general question should be raised concerning the ability of the military to dominate a medieval society. Sovereigns were supposed to be sacrosanct and authorized by God or supernatural powers. Each of those rulers used military forces for defense and, whenever possible, to expand their territories or to secure internal stability from private clashes (Crone 1992, 73). State-controlled power existed alongside rigorous state violence. On the other hand, medieval

sovereigns surely acted within a multi-sided framework of civilian, religious, administrative and economic elements. Many kinds of armed power and violence were inherent in political practice and remained part of daily experience for subjects. Violence and power were realized in a variety of contexts. Violent non-state activities could develop into anti-state tendencies which sometimes even led to a new state power (Sieferle and Breuninger 1998). On the administrative level, the material capacity to recruit and maintain armed forces was quite limited. In the narrower context of military history, actions typically involved a relatively limited attrition realized through almost constant skirmishes, clashes and sieges, but rarely leading to big battles (Parker 1995, 2ff).

### **Military organization in Islamic polities**

In the Islamic world until the tenth century, a spectrum of armed forces had developed consisting of heterogeneous elements (Bosworth 1975; Nicolle 1982). On the side of the state, there existed standing troops and guards at the courts of the caliphs as well as the courts of provincial sovereigns. Beside these troops there were police forces and armed auxiliaries supporting tax collectors. Many tribal warriors represented distinctive features of informal as well as state character. Often those warriors acted for their personal benefit, but they also became involved in state campaigns or protected the routes of caravans. In an even more informal way, voluntary "warriors of faith" (*mujahidin* or *ghuzat*) operated along the borders with non-Islamic territories, armed militias (*ahdath*) protected urban sites, and armed vagabonds (*ayyarun*) plagued cities especially in Syria, Mesopotamia and Iran.

The most important requirement for the recruitment, maintenance and alimentation of standing troops of soldiers was an advanced money economy (Contamine 1992, 192ff), which in the early medieval world achieved its highest development in China. In the Islamic world, the majority of subjects remained bound to natural economic relations, but since the Arab expansion of the seventh and eighth centuries, a new and increasingly multi-ethnic administrative and warrior elite of rich consumers had been established. This elite commanded huge sums of cash and was able to encourage agrarian, industrial and commercial activities as well as an intensive monetary circulation. From the eighth

century, a money economy and the centralization of state revenues resulted in a rapid development of mercenary troops. Potential mercenaries came from the border regions of the Islamic world, especially from Central Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. Many soldiers were bought as military slaves or joined the services of sovereigns voluntarily under their own chiefs.

Some comparisons and rough calculations on the basis of Arab sources make it possible to draw conclusions on certain economic expenses for military purposes (Hoffmann 1994). At the beginning of the tenth century, the military expenses of the caliphs of Baghdad may have comprised 50 per cent of the 14 million dinars in state revenue. About 50,000 standing troops received pay and extorted huge additional benefits (Asadov 1995). Since the second half of the ninth century a foot soldier of the Abbasid caliph had received 70 dinars a year, three times the earnings of a Baghdad day-laborer. A cavalryman received two or three times more than a foot soldier. Additionally, the caliphs had to pay money to their troops on the occasion of their enthronement and at the beginnings of military campaigns. To strengthen the loyalty of military leaders, it had been common practice for centuries to allot estates to them as private property, but in 932 even regular mercenaries could buy estates with their pay (Ibn al-Athir 1862, 8: 182; Cahen 1960). In the first half of the tenth century, because of their lack of cash, the caliphs were often forced to sell their private treasures and protected pious endowments (*waqf*), or confiscated considerable sums from the bureaucracy. Even the money of a remarkable "diwan of secret gains" (*diwan al-marafiq*), to which dismissed officials had to deliver part of the bribes they received, had to be distributed among the troops (Ashtor 1976, 132ff, 143, 155).

In spite of the military burden on state finances, it remained typical that such expenditures always formed but one part of the economic actions of Islamic rulers. Like other sovereigns in state-centralized medieval territories, even in times of crisis they expended enormous amounts to maintain palaces and courts, a huge bureaucracy, the luxurious consumption of the elite, prestigious religious or secular buildings, and religious, scientific or cultural specialists. The sums commanded by the wealthy were truly astonishing. For example, the private property of an Egyptian vizier who died in 991 was estimated at about 4 million gold dinars, with the embalming of his corpse costing 100,000 dinars. After the middle of the tenth century, a Buyid emir paid 13 million silver dirhams for a new palace in Baghdad. The most



famous Buyid emir, Adud al-Daula, annually gained 320 million dirhams, which he spent mostly for buildings, economic stabilization and cultural purposes (Lane-Pool 1901, 111, 121; Mez 1922, 20, 24, 371). Wastefulness and luxurious lifestyles alone do not seem to have resulted from the boundless extravagance of the sovereigns; some contemporary sources interpreted these behaviors as a demonstration of the brightness and prestige of the state, designed to overawe potential enemies (Busse 1977, 63).

If these comments make it appear that the caliphate experienced few military problems in the field, it should be stated that in Iraq south of Baghdad at the end of the tenth century military activities had a serious impact on the economy. Following the great rebellion of black agrarian slaves (*zanj*), disastrous clashes within the military, and permanent invasions of the socio-religious warriors of the Qarmatians from their own state in the east of the Arabian peninsula, the agriculture in fertile southern Iraq/Sawad and the long distance trade in the Persian Gulf suffered considerable damage. In addition, the caliphs and their military leaders lost control over fertile northern Mesopotamia, including the city of Mosul.

Since the middle of the tenth century the Buyid emirs in Baghdad had been trying to gain control over these economic and political crises. Because of his acute shortage of cash, however, the first Buyid emir in Baghdad, Mu'izz al-Daula, had to grant concessions (*iqta'at*) after 945 to his Dailami-Iranian and Turkish officers and also to his Turkish mercenaries. These grants enabled the recipients to collect taxes on the soil (*kharaj*) directly from the peasants. The scope of such a "substitution for pay" for the individual mercenaries may have reached the huge amount of between 200,000 and 500,000 dirhams (13,000 to 33,000 gold dinars) annually (Sato 1982, 86-87). According to the contemporary historian Miskawaih (d. 1030), such concessions opened the way to a more severe exploitation of the peasantry by the military, and also caused mercenaries to leave their units for two or three years at a time in order to raise their incomes. Military leaders themselves engaged in trade and paid no customs duty, impairing normal economic life. The remaining small peasant owners fled to the "protection" (*himaya*) of military leaders (Amedroz 1914, 2: 97, 174; Cahen 1956, 287ff). On the whole, even these features did not mean an overall advance of the military to direct usurpation of land and agrarian taxes

(Duri 1974, 2), because such concessions were concentrated in small regions of southern Iraq and southwestern Iran.

Buyid emirs often considered concessions for the direct raising of pay by their mercenaries as a temporary solution, arising from an acute shortage of money in the state treasury. As soon as the flow of money in the treasury increased the conditions changed. Especially in the more stable Iranian provinces, Buyid emirs were able to collect the cash necessary to maintain their military by withholding tribute to the caliph, confiscating wealth from their rich subjects, pacifying their territories, encouraging irrigation systems or long-distance trade, and reorganizing the military. At the end of the tenth century, for instance, more than 1,000 non-entitled "intruders" in pay-lists were divested of their *iqta'at* concessions. The taxes of this regained land strengthened the central money resources (Amedroz 1914, 3: 323ff, 362, 384; Bosworth 1965/1966, 153, 157, 164). Even in more crisis-prone Iraq, the Buyid Adud al-Daula used his rich incomes from Iranian provinces to pay his troops in cash until he died in 983 (Amedroz 1914, 2: 260, 285, 322). After his death, however, his hostile relatives led continuous factional clashes.

At the dawn of the eleventh century, the Fatimid rulers of Egypt enjoyed greater opportunities. A Persian traveler and follower of the Fatimid caliphs described in 1047 a parade of troops in the capital, Cairo, and estimated the number of warriors at 215,000. Among them were members of many North African Berber tribes, Turkish mercenaries as horse archers, black African and other slaves of the guards, black foot-soldiers and a considerable number of Arab-Bedouin auxiliaries, each of them with their specific weapons and fighting techniques (Nasir-i Khusraw 1881, 45f; Lev 1987). The report reveals that at least until the middle of the eleventh century the Fatimid caliphs were able to mobilize sufficient economic resources for the maintenance of their standing troops. Here, too, the base of this maintenance remained a developed money economy. Military payments stemmed from the taxes on state land, which had gone often to local civilian notables in the form of tax farming for a fixed period. The amount for military maintenance may have reached one-third of the Fatimid state revenue without seriously impairing the flourishing economy for around 100 years (Ashtor 1976, 193).

## Economic and military interdependency

Interdependencies between the military and the economy in Islamic societies of these times were always of ambiguous character. Of course, permanent clashes and armed conflicts were based on the world-wide contemporary opinion that war had to feed war. The rulers and their subordinates ruthlessly plundered their subject territories, and in the long run the destruction of irrigation systems or the interruption of routes of trade and pilgrimage had a negative impact on economy and ecology (Watson 1983, 139ff). On the other hand, a look at different sources between the eighth and the eleventh centuries reveals that agricultural supplies remained generally stable, except for short periods of acute crisis. Stability was reflected in figures indicating that the real income of a craftsman in Iraq, based on the price of bread, grew between the ninth and tenth centuries by 113 percent. In Egypt in the tenth century, a craftsman's income increased by 100 percent.<sup>1</sup>

The continuous provision of food for soldiers, horses and camels proved to be a stimulus as well as a burden to agriculture. Interpreting this alimentation generally as a negative and unproductive consumption seems to be one-sided, given medieval conditions, for those societies were marked world-wide by low overall productivity alongside luxurious elite consumption. And even the growing demand for mounts and transport animals as well as provision of livestock for the elites, which resulted in Fatimid Egypt in a decrease of cereals and an expansion of pastures and cattle-breeding, should not be viewed *a priori* as a general failure (Bianquis 1980, 87ff, 100f). Urban economy and industry received stronger impulses through the maintenance of the elite and its military (especially the cavalry) with arms, equipment, clothes and food. In Fatimid history it was evident that the relocation of the court, the army and the administration from Ifriqiya/Tunisia to Egypt encouraged industrial activities in the land of the Nile. At the same time, this relocation contributed to a shift in major centers of trade and trade routes, including those involving European partners, from Kairuan and Mahdiya in Tunisia to Alexandria and Cairo in Egypt (Goitein 1967-1988: 1, 32).

Efficiency of state power, stability of the administration and securing favorable domestic and foreign conditions for productive fields of the economy proved to be decisive for interdependencies of the military and the economy. For example, the famous Buyid emir, Adud al-

Daula, ordered more civilian than military buildings, including cofferdams, canals, postal stations and traffic routes, which encouraged trade and economy especially in some Iranian provinces. The Egyptian Fatimids strengthened the financial administration, which remained in the hands of Coptic Christians. This administration controlled for a long time the regular auctions of agrarian and urban taxes and secured in this way the money for the military and for a pompous courtly life.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the shift of trade centers from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea, stimulated in part by the increasing demand from European cities, had good results in different Egyptian economic fields.<sup>3</sup>

### **The tribal impact**

The military activities of tribal warriors proved to be especially important for interdependencies between the military and the economy in Islamic regions. Those activities should be considered as specific to the territories ranging from Spain to Central Asia where steppes, semi-steppes, deserts and highlands constituted the dominant geographic background. Few other medieval civilizations existed under similar conditions, but in the Islamic world many Arab, Berber, Kurdish, Iranian and Turkish tribes continued their nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life in areas that were mostly uncultivable (Cahen 1975, 310). Nomadic Bedouin and other tribal warriors, through their mobility, frugality and toughness, always earned a reputation for expertise in war techniques dominated by bows and arrows as well as cut-and-thrust weapons.<sup>4</sup> For many centuries, the centrally organized regions in the Near East and Egypt had no real capacity in economic and military terms to subject nomads to state structures in a lasting manner. The authorities continued on the eve of the eleventh century the traditional policy of including nomad and other tribal warriors as autonomous auxiliary forces under their own leaders in larger campaigns and expeditions, paying them with a part of the booty. In the same manner, nomad warriors were traditionally obliged to secure the routes of trade and pilgrimages. Because of the vast geographic dimensions spanned by inter-regional trade, this security actually enabled long-distance communication. The impact of this activity can rarely be overestimated.

At the end of the tenth century, the political ambitions of tribal aristocracies reached new dimensions. The leaders of the mostly settled Banu Taghlib, the Hamdanids, allied with other tribal warriors and utilized the political weakness of the caliphate in Baghdad to establish their independent sovereignty over parts of northern Mesopotamia (including Mosul) and northern Syria (including Aleppo). Safeguarding their power, the Hamdanids removed tribal members from their armed troops. Instead, they recruited Turkish mercenaries fled from Baghdad and also some Kurdish tribal warriors. To guarantee the maintenance of these troops, the Hamdanids made every effort to decrease their tribute to Baghdad and to strengthen taxpaying urban crafts and trade, intensify agrarian exploitation, and increase the cultivation of cotton in a kind of *latifundium* economy (Canard 1971).

From the beginning of the tenth century the social-religious movement of the Isma'ili-Shi'ite Qarmatians had gathered considerable groups of Bedouins together with heterodox Muslim peasants in an independent state in the east of the Arabian peninsula. These Qarmatians led numerous military attacks in southern Iraq, and their extensive plundering of caravans ended in their control over some pilgrimage routes to Mecca. But their state was hard hit by the bloody failure of its religious utopia in the year 931, and their activities reverted to extensive expeditions of plundering and pillage (Madelung 1971). Troops of the Qarmatian state often advanced to the Fertile Crescent and gained tribute from Syrian towns. For some time they allied with the Buyids or the Hamdanids and could make use of massive help from Syrian tribes. After attacks even in Egypt the new Fatimid caliphs were obliged temporarily to pay the Qarmatians some tribute.

The different military activities of tribes indicate that views of a general "Bedouinization" of the Near East in the eleventh and twelfth centuries remain problematic (Cahen 1968, 132). Without doubt, Qarmatian expeditions had a negative impact on peasants and settled agriculture, especially in regions near the desert (Yusuf 1985, 185-89), but on the whole their depredations remained relatively short episodes that do not support a negative interpretation of all Bedouin or nomad activities. Expeditions of plundering and pillaging do not support claims for a continuous social decline in Islamic regions.<sup>5</sup> On the whole, the relationship between settled and nomadic populations had existed for many centuries in a symbiosis that was not destroyed by

nomadic military actions in times of central-state weakness. This symbiosis was marked mainly by common economic objectives between nomadic cattle-breeders on the one hand and settled urban and agricultural people on the other (Nicolle 1990).

### **Conclusion: The limitations of the militarization thesis**

The divergent conditions in Islamic regions at the dawn of the eleventh century show that in interior matters the efficiency of the economy was related to state stability and an effective administration. In this connection, a wide margin of subjectively guided action remained in the hands of the rulers and their civilian advisors. Money relations, a continuous flow of taxes from agriculture, industry and commerce, and the guaranteed securing of precious metals or long-distance trade routes could stabilize the economy, and thereby the maintenance of the mercenary soldiery. On the other hand, an occasional decrease of cultivable area or signs of depopulation – with regionally varying dimensions – could stimulate both military adventurism and decentralization of territorial control, the growing pressure of authorities and deterioration of soil contributing to natural disasters (Watson 1983).

External conditions that transcended military effects, such as the changing structures of long-distance trade, exerted a major influence on the Near Eastern economy. The Buyids, for example, acted in a period of decreasing long-distance trade in the Persian Gulf resulting from political chaos in Iraq, the Qarmatian expeditions, and a devastating earthquake that destroyed the trade center of Siraf around the year 1000. Some rulers in territories close to the Persian Gulf reacted by plundering and squeezing money out of merchants, and the Buyids had insufficient means to intervene on the coast of Oman. Traders and public servants, including Christians and Jews, were migrating from Iraq to Syria, Egypt, the North African Maghreb and Islamic Spain at beginning of the tenth century. With all these refugees departed money and administrative capacities.

Meanwhile, in the west, international trade in the Mediterranean experienced a great advance around the year 1000, strengthened by an economic offensive from the side of upper-Italian cities as well as an active Fatimid trade policy. All this encouraged the transit trade in Indian spices across the Red Sea. Furthermore, this policy brought into long-distance trade circuits such Egyptian products as alum, in high

demand by Italian textile handicrafts (Udovitch 1999, 273-74). Thus the possibilities for Fatimid Egypt improved and luxury goods as well as slaves, wood, metals and arms urgently desired in Egypt could be imported. To keep up the relatively high level of trans-regional exchange, it proved important to all parties to secure a long-lasting stability of the Fatimid currency. Despite all military disturbances, Egyptian authorities prioritized the preservation of a continuous flow of gold from western Sudan and Nubia (Schulz 1998, 327 ff.).

Observing the variety of contradictory tendencies in the Near East and Egypt, it seems one-sided to look for a mono-causal chain, reaching from military expenditures and structures to a continuous militarization of Islamic states (Wickham 1995, 462; Kennedy 1995, 378). The real positions and possibilities of an aristocracy and elite formed by the military were obviously embedded in a changeable network of civilian, military and cultural-religious connections. As in other contemporary societies, the economic foundations for this net of connections in Islamic regions lay in conditions outside the direct or indirect control of the military. Thus, the state of production in agrarian zones, the extraction of minerals or other raw materials, the extent of market relations based on towns, and the judicial security of civilian properties developed in different ways, not simply because of military influence.

For this reason, it may be stimulating to consider long-term developments in Islamic regions or in other state-centralized medieval civilizations as bearing important contradictions in themselves. Such developments might result from over-expanded empires with inadequate possibilities for productive integration (Sivers 1980, 79f). In this manner, admitting a genetic incapacity resulting from insufficient productive stability, administrative-fiscal and over-dimensioned empires might be exposed to permanent tendencies of dissipation into greater or smaller state-territories. In more compact, newly formed states, the agrarian and industrial surplus could be used for regional purposes instead of transfer to a center of exploitation, but at the same time these new state territories always faced new military requirements that resulted in different economic and social consequences. These tendencies indeed were not a temporary phenomenon or a problem specific to the Near East in the year 1000: they were a permanent difficulty characterizing many medieval, pre-industrial societies.

## Notes

1. The average real income in Egypt decreased at the beginning of the eleventh century to 71 per cent, but it remained even in this time one third higher than in Iraq (Ashtor 1969, 464).
2. According to al-Maqrizi (1970, 1: 103-06), the number of non-canonical taxes for crafts and trade rose in the early Fatimid period from 80 to 100, and yielded a yearly volume of 100,000 gold dinars, but for a long time this was possible without severe economic disturbances (Udovitch 1988, 55f, 70f).
3. Because of those urgent needs Italian merchants paid huge sums even for products of inferior quality (Goiten 1967-1988, 1: 44ff).
4. Within these commonly accepted views, however, scholars still debate the preconditions for this reputation and the long-term consequences of armed tribal activities (See Asad 1973).
5. Some followers of the great North African historian Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) still argue in this manner. For a critical view, see Sivers 1980.

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## **Chapter 9**

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### **Temple Economy in South Asia**

**James Heitzman**

The concept of Southernization appeared in Lynda Shaffer's 1994 article suggesting that, if the phenomenon of Westernization was the dominant historical theme of the last 500 years, it depended on a previous process of development beginning in South and Southeast Asia and lasting over 1,000 years. The elements of this earlier developmental paradigm included innovations in the production and marketing of textiles, the exploitation of precious metals, long-distance maritime trade in the "Southern Ocean," the commercialization of spices, expansion of sugar and rice cultivation, and advances in mathematics. According to Shaffer's thesis, the technological and organizational components of Southernization were affecting East Asia by the fifth century, the Islamic world by the eighth century, and the Mediterranean by the twelfth century, stimulating in each region a variety of intellectual and institutional changes.

If the rise of the West perpetuates a fascination with a Euro-American core, with its corollary of the peripheral other, we might want to retain a healthy skepticism before a construct that projects the same regional dominance-hegemony discourse onto an anterior period. The Southernization thesis does help us, however, in shifting our focus away from the duality of a Mediterranean-Chinese axis and toward the Indian Ocean. It projects South Asia as the pivot of the Afro-Eurasian macro-region at the peak of its expression around the year 1000. The nature and scale of South Asia's economy thus become crucial spheres of inquiry for world historians who would criticize the Southernization thesis.

In this paper I will discuss the salient issues confronting the economic historian of South Asia during this period, and will describe some conceptual and methodological approaches that have proven fruitful. I will then provide a model of the relationship of religious institutions to economic activity, and present a vision of "temple economy" that will allow an understanding of an institutional matrix of agriculture, urbanization, and trade. Finally, I will discuss the applicability of this model to the variegated human and physical geography of South Asia, aiming toward a comprehensive portrait of a regional economy.

### **Time, space, and early history**

The first task is to consider for a moment the understanding of history as a series of chronological stages, and in particular the teleological division of history into the ancient, medieval and modern. This temporal categorization, applied originally to European historiography, has formed the basis for influential and deeply entrenched historical perceptions in South Asia. It has tended to extend the medieval into the time of the Mughal Empire (originating in 1526), and even up to the eighteenth century. This consigns the year 1000 at best to the early medieval, or at worst to some form of late ancient formation. It is not hard to see how early historians of British India might support the colonial project by positing an extended childhood and adolescence in the historical development of their subjects. The peculiar tenacity of the same categories after Independence in 1947 lies not only in the inertia of liberal historical frameworks, but also, paradoxically, in the importance of Marxian thought for South Asian intellectuals and especially for historians. Critical theories of political economy, so important for the deconstruction of imperialism, brought with them a fascination with the crucial moment when the mode of

production shifted to "feudal" and then to "capitalist" relations (Vanina 1996). Because the concept of feudalism contains both political and an economic components, ultimately traced to historical moments in northwest Europe, it embroils us in category debates that translate rather poorly to the South Asian context and do little to advance empirical or theoretical understanding. The idea that the social order was feudal retains, however, a tenacious hold over historical constructions.

A majority of historians in South Asia trace the transition to a feudal mode of production and the early medieval in the sixth-century decline of the Gupta polity. This penchant arises partly because of the decidedly northern focus of Indian historiography, concentrating on the hegemony of Magadha in northeastern India for 800 years and then reacquiring the national epic with the hegemony of Delhi after 1200. The strategy consigns the sixth to the thirteenth centuries to an age with its own peculiarities, bracketed between the glories of a Gupta Age and the rise of the Delhi Sultanate, which parallels vulgar interpretations of the medieval in European historiography. According to this viewpoint, urbanization declined, economic activity became highly localized, and political fragmentation proceeded apace. Devotional (*bhakti*) religiosity became the dominant mode of public discourse, placing a servile, adoring humanity before an all-powerful, lordly divinity. Marxian scholarship views these tendencies as retrograde, or at best as an extended transition that was necessary, in order to eventually reclaim rationality in economic organization and in public discourse, coordinated by a centralized state authority. At this level Marxian historiography displays a peculiar congruency with Indian nationalist and *hindutva* ("Hindu-ness") ideologies. The latter decry the disunity of the early medieval, with a weak body politic that allowed foreign conquerors (described as Muslims) to enter South Asia beginning in 1000. The Southernization thesis, projecting the period around the tenth century as the peak period for a South Asian developmental paradigm, directly challenges the thesis of decline accepted by many scholars within India.

Alternatives to the quest for a unitary South Asian state come primarily from regional histories, including those of independent modern nations and the individual states within India and Pakistan. These literatures extol the period between the seventh and thirteenth centuries, concentrating on the glories of regional kingdoms and their monuments as incubators of regional languages and cultures. From another perspective, a large body of evidence indicates that South and Southeast Asia remained a single economic and cultural system, with regular movements of people, goods and ideas in both directions,

during the entire period in question. The Khmer state in particular demonstrates the indigenous development of an imperial style that parallels in form and substance the qualities of contemporary South Asian states. The intensity of interactions between the two macro-regions seems to have begun long before the sixth century and intensified thereafter, perhaps reaching a high point between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries (Coedès 1968; Hall 1985; Higham 1989; Kulke 1993; Heitzman 2000). Challenges from regional histories and macro-regional approaches temper a more strictly chronological understanding of South Asian history.

### **The temple economy: Spatial and institutional models**

In order to conceptualize what I term the temple economy, we may focus our gaze initially on the local level, where people were creating their livelihoods and their social organizations literally from the dirt underneath their feet. This method may yield descriptions of processes that established *centrality* at the spatial, institutional and conceptual levels. If we can define central places, we may then move to a discussion of change in the modes of social interaction that took place in them and around them over time.

The discussion of centrality is inseparable from an understanding of sources. The most important South Asian historical sources for the tenth and eleventh centuries are inscriptions on stone and metal that record grants of resources by pious donors to religious institutions. While we have a large corpus of literary works, mostly religious in nature, only a few chronicles or administrative manuals provide the coordinates in time and space that might supplement the inscriptional database. Initially this may seem like an unfortunate limitation, but in fact the epigraphic corpus is quite large enough to provide a rich lode for reconstructing a wide range of social life. The inscriptions come from specific places and often contain dates within texts presenting a vast array of detail on people, places, organizations, financial arrangements, and legal procedures. Poetic preambles that praise the deeds of reigning dynasties furnish information on battles and the genealogies of royal families. Inscriptions are thus invaluable for the historian.

Before drawing analyses from epigraphy, two caveats are in order. First, although thousands of inscriptions refer to the centuries before and after the year 1000, they are geographically unbalanced. Southern India, and especially the state of Tamil Nadu, are the sources of a disproportionate number of surviving inscriptions coming from

hundreds of temples. In Tamil Nadu, there are sometimes dozens of records available for each year. Throughout northern and central India, there are far fewer surviving temples and the inscriptional corpus is far less extensive, with numerous spatial and chronological gaps; for some regions, there are only a dozen inscriptions per century. Even within Tamil Nadu, the records tend to bunch up at a limited range of sites, usually those close to rivers or other permanent sources of water. Second, almost all of these inscriptions transcribe into stone the rather dry legal documents concerned with a relatively limited range of transactions, typically bestowing resources on religious institutions. Some resemble the plaques installed today in the foyers of hospitals, listing donors and foundation dates. Most are very short listings of donor names and the resources bestowed, e.g. foodstuffs, animals, lands, taxes, and labor. The historiography for the year 1000 is thus replete with fragmentary data on the rituals and administration of religious foundations, while discussion of other fields relies on scholarly interpretation of parenthetical allusions within the epigraphs.

Because the religious grants almost always describe the alienation of agrarian resources, they have been important for influential interpretations that picture the agricultural economy within a feudal model, most closely associated with R. S. Sharma and his associates. According to this viewpoint, late Gupta inscriptions that described transfers of property to brahmanas and to religious institutions were heralding a massive deconstruction of a centralized state apparatus, and the alienation of public rights to private parties. Extrapolating from a limited number of grants concerned with bestowal of a "livelihood" (*jivita*, *jivana*) in return for services, this viewpoint suggests that religious donations were but one species of a privatization that was occurring at all levels of the agrarian economy. In the case of land grants, the state typically agreed to recognize lands as free from taxes and from interference by its own agents. After several centuries, the progressive devolution of public authority to a wide variety of subsidiary "feudatories" resulted in a greatly debilitated state apparatus. An agrarian economy that once was under the control of powerful empires became a patchwork of domains under the control of religious personnel and military leaders who owed only nominal loyalty to regional kings. By the year 1000, this process had reached the point where regional rulers no longer had the ability to marshal the funds or people needed to repel "invaders" like Mahmud of Ghazni. The progressive ruralization of the economy contributed to the disappearance of urban sites throughout northern India, some dating back over a thousand years, and trade became ever more localized. Cities, trade, and the state expanded in scope only during the twelfth



and thirteenth centuries, as the Delhi Sultanate initiated the slow and painful process of reassembling an imperial power (Sharma 1959, 1965, 1983, 1985; Jha 1987, 1993).

Recent agricultural history from southern India, associated initially with the work of Y. Subbarayalu and Noboru Karashima, starts from a different direction. Tamil records from the earliest times refer to the importance of the *nadu*, or a multi-village agrarian zone that at times also corresponded to an administrative area. By the eleventh century, where the density of surviving inscriptions permits an in-depth look at some nadus, they might contain somewhere between five and 30 villages. A nadu often received the name of one village within its boundaries, which may signify an administrative center, but in some cases seems to refer to some primordial identification of the entire area with an original settlement. In many cases the boundaries of a nadu straddle both sides of a river or a system of interlinked artificial lakes, strongly suggesting an origin within water committees. Under certain circumstances, the leaders of the nadu came together in assemblies of *nattar* to witness administrative procedures or to deliberate on public matters. Where identification of these *nattar* is possible, they appear as possessors (*utaiyar*) or elders (*kilavar*) within villages of the nadu or in villages of other nadus as well. In many cases, they belonged to leading families of agriculturalists. In a few instances, the *nattar* seemed capable of levying taxes on lands or business transactions occurring within the boundaries of the nadu (Subbarayalu 1973, 1982, 1995; Karashima 1984, 1994).

The terminology of the nadu comes from the four main Dravidian languages of southern India, but similar types of local territorial organization also appear in a variety of contexts in records from central and northern India. The implication here is that the large majority of the population living in villages and engaged in agricultural production did not consist simply of a bound peasantry manipulated by the state or its designated "feudatories." The people of agricultural societies had developed indigenous institutions for production and for the administration of local economy. Once we accept subaltern agency for the elaboration of a village-based irrigation and agricultural regime, complete with its own leadership, the evolution of the agrarian order depends less on the fragmentation of an earlier imperial authority and more on the problem of constructing larger systems from many small, pre-existing components.

This is where religious institutions enter the picture. A number of scholars ranging from Burton Stein to Hermann Kulke have described how local elites perceived communities of brahmanas, temples, or assemblies of monks as suitable recipients of resources that would

allow performance of religious rituals, guaranteeing prosperity and also legitimating political and economic influence. Religious institutions thus became places where aspirants to royal status could contact local elites and bring them into ritualized modes of interaction that constituted local and regional politics. Large armies could come together through the amalgamation of a professional military force paid by the kings with levies assembled by local leaderships bound to the kingdom by religious rituals. From this perspective, it was essential for the state to alienate resources to local religious institutions in order to maintain connections with local leaderships. The loss of these resources did not deplete royal power, but actually built it, especially in areas where it had rarely appeared before. The thousands of eleemosynary grants surviving after the sixth century, and particularly numerous after the tenth century, were not symptoms of political decline but were signs of a more intensive political mobilization. In the year 1000, South Asia had not descended to the depths of a fragmented feudal order, but had evolved an expansive ritual polity. This was the reason why large temples were under construction throughout South Asia around the year 1000, for they served as prominent ritual beacons, advertising the emergent power of regional kingdoms that commanded unprecedented prestige. Leadership did not necessarily require a direct administrative control over extensive agrarian hinterlands, but rather the mobilization of support from militant agrarian elites (Stein 1977, 1980, 1985, 1995; Kulke 1977, 1979, 1982; Kulke and Rothermund 1986; Heitzman 1997).

The understanding of religious donations as political acts, and the elevation of religious institutions to crucial components in political ideology, aid in the understanding of architectural gigantism at the imperial centers as well as the expansion in the numbers of stone temples throughout India. It also aids in an explication of the multifarious economic roles played by temples and assemblies of ritual specialists. The absence of references to state bureaucracies in charge of irrigation systems and the strategic location of temples within the nadu or other local agrarian systems allow us to see temples in South Asia playing crucial roles in hydraulic management, similar to their roles expressed more recently in places like Bali (Geertz 1980; Lansing 1983). The extensive descriptions of the staff at Tanjavur indicate that imperial shrines assembled large numbers of educated and talented specialists, including large numbers of women, while the smaller temples constructed by local leaderships attracted less numerous, but similarly trained, management staffs. Art, architecture, mathematics and the physical sciences, and literature thrived in and around religious institutions, accounting for the markedly religious character of the

literature from this period (Nilakantha Sastri 1932b; Nagaswamy 1978; Michell 1977).

There were also more direct impacts on the agrarian economy. Donations of cash to temples became part of investment portfolios. Some of the capital went to managers of animal herds, who returned either produce or money payments directly to the temples in order to support rituals. Most capital went into the development of agricultural land. Locations on the edges of settled agricultural tracts or new villages carved out of the waste received a disproportionate percentage of capital inputs. As lands became productive, they returned principal and interest to the temples, while serving as the jumping-off points for new rounds of agrarian expansion and patronage. In this way the multiplication of religious institutions accompanied economic development and became a stimulus for agricultural growth. The transfer of resources to religious institutions may not have resulted in a net loss to donors, but may have been a strategy for augmenting income. We may see the administrative network at Tanjavur as simply the upper end of a larger process whereby temples newly built in stone by subordinate leaderships were beginning to accumulate portfolios and more extensive staffs, playing increasingly important roles in the expansion of the local economy. Burton Stein's early research (1960) indicated that South Indian temples remained important in local agrarian expansion through the sixteenth century.

An important trend in scholarship during the last 25 years has been the utilization of core-periphery models in the analysis of the regional kingdoms that proliferated in South Asia around the year 1000. "Cores" were concentrations of village farming communities and irrigation systems capable of yielding an agrarian surplus for the use of supra-village elites linked ritually and through military affairs to royal families. This mode of analysis suggests that the early first millennium was still a period of hegemony for the Yamuna-Ganga river system of northern India. Its grouping of core territories were linked to each other and to more circumscribed urban outposts in the south through networks of trade and through Jaina or Buddhist monasticism. The realignment of the north Indian urban and imperial complex after the sixth century accompanied a steady expansion of economy within other cores throughout the subcontinent, leading to a multilateral contest for hegemony at the pan-Indian level, and more complex modes of interaction within the regional kingdoms.

Hermann Kulke's work on Orissa has described the processes involved in the construction of the regional kingdom from different components of the regional core and its periphery, leading eventually to the unification of several original core zones. This process resulted in

control over expanses of contiguous village farming communities, linked through the commercial activity of mercantile groups. It required control over the ritual transactions occurring at temples that grew at strategic locations in the mercantile network and at the points where rival political affiliations came into contact (Kulke 1978; 1979). The year 1000 thus witnessed the unfolding of an indigenous South Asian system of economic development and political mobilization that found in temples the crucial communication and information nodes or repositories of knowledge from which to build larger networks. It is not surprising to note that subsequent developments led to the growth of even larger and more complex royal centers, such as that at Khajuraho in north-central India, the elaboration of expansive mercantile centers, such as that at Mount Abu in Rajasthan, and the growth of temples' architectural assemblages to the size of small cities, as at Srirangam in Tamil Nadu. Richard Eaton's work (1993) on Bangladesh indicates that the role of temples in agrarian expansion and political unification became translated into an Islamic idiom and continued to unfold on the periphery into the eighteenth century.

We may see the economic picture in the year 1000 as the slow and steady elaboration of a core-periphery model of development involving the intensification of settlement and cultural complexity around older agricultural and trade centers. The model spread into formerly peripheral areas to form larger cores or separate mini-cores that could be added together to form kingdoms. The beauty of this model is that it positions the surviving inscriptions, and the religious institutions that have preserved them, at the center of the most significant social innovations of the tenth and eleventh centuries. The records were engraved on metal and stone because they expressed the most crucial social relations of the time.

### **Urbanization and trade**

As temples grew into sources of literacy, expertise, capital and ritual legitimization, they attracted members of artisan or commercial groups who provided specialized labor and products necessary for larger populations and more sophisticated institutions. The striking association of temples with networks of towns that grew at the same time strongly suggests a close relationship between ritual and urban institutions. In peninsular India, temples were literally at the heart of town life, placed architecturally at the center of quadrilateral street patterns where artisan and merchant groups lived in discrete neighborhoods.

It is clear that urbanization was an important feature of the economic situation in South Asia in the year 1000, but is less clear that this was a new beginning. An earlier pattern of urbanization that had expanded between 500 BCE and 500 CE in northern India revolved around a number of ancient, fortified centers such as Kausambi, Mathura and Takshashila. They were linked through long-distance trading networks with scattered nodes throughout peninsular India and outside the region, interacting with the Mediterranean and Central Asian worlds. Although this earlier pattern was robust, it seems always to have relied on the interconnections among a number of discrete, localized agricultural zones supporting one or a limited number of primate cities, often surrounded by fortification walls.

The pattern seems to have undergone considerable disruption by the sixth century, apparently supporting the feudal hypothesis. The long distance connectivity in this network may have simply changed its forms, leading to a realignment of economic activity within a multiplicity of nadu-like agrarian zones. As in the case of Europe after the decline of Rome, the long-term consequences were a slow, steady expansion of village farming communities and irrigation systems, the growth of local agrarian leaderships, and the linkage of the economy to mercantile systems through numerous small towns.

When we observe the urban situation in 1000, especially in peninsular India, cities were neither massive nor associated with fortification walls. They were rarely the manifestation of a state administrative functionality. Urban sites were more often localized collectivities of specialized agricultural, artisan and mercantile communities, often in geographically separate settlements, operating within complex, ritualized modes of exchange and linked to long-distance trade. If we look for giant cities, palaces and monumental architecture aside from the temples, we may miss a specifically South Asian urbanization and one of the world's most powerful economies.

The works of art still extant at temples indicate that artisans were capable of the highest quality of production during this period. The identification of different productive specializations with caste or *jati* rarely occurs overtly in the sources from the year 1000, but it is clear that an association of crafts with hereditary social groups was common. It is possible to see "guild" organization more clearly with mercantile groups, specializing in finance and the transportation of goods through wholesale and retail networks. In this context it is useful to conceive of commerce at two interconnected levels.

First, there were those groups concerned with long-distance movements of goods, operating both within South Asia and outside the region as well. These groups outfitted their own security forces, and

indeed it is sometimes difficult to separate merchant organizations or even artisans from their military roles. During the reign of the Chola king Rajaraja I, for example, Tamil merchants operating in what are today Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Indonesia seem to have been closely connected to military operations of the Chola state, and the extension of South Indian political power traced pre-existing lines of commercial competition. Conversely, patronage continued to flow from Southeast Asia to the Buddhist site of Bodh Gaya in old Magadha, and a Buddhist shrine at Nagapattanam answered the needs of traders from Southeast Asia who were visiting the Tamil country (Guy 1993/94). Extensive finds of Chinese pottery suggest that East Asian trade connections were growing in Sri Lanka from at least the ninth century, reaching a peak in peninsular India by the thirteenth century (Karashima 2002). By the 1300s we can perceive the clear outlines of the multi-regional trading patterns in the Indian Ocean that Janet Abu-Lughod (1989) has described as part of an emerging world system. Literary and archaeological references dating back at least 2,000 years indicate that the Indian Ocean components of such a system, including traders coming from South Asia, had long supported extensive contacts linking the eastern coast of Africa and Southwest Asia to Southeast Asia and southern China.

Second, there were groups concerned mostly with the redistribution of goods at the local level, some of whom interacted as well with long-distance traders. Groups of local merchants in commercial settlements (*nagara*, *pattana*) formed their own assemblies and negotiated with artisan groups within separate neighborhoods located in the vicinity of temples. Kenneth Hall (1980, 1994) suggested that each nadu in the Tamil country supported one mercantile center, forming a matrix of local and regional markets moving goods within local circuits. My own work (2001) on the neighborhood of the major temple center of Kanchipuram suggests that this matrix may have been suppressed in the immediate vicinity of larger settlements, which served as the gateways to interregional traffic. Research has been tracing more complex patterns of small urban sites (Prasad 1989) and indicates that several nagarams came to exist within some nadus after the year 1000, closely associated with Jainism and Buddhism (Thyagarajan 1999).

Let us look at a few examples of South Asian cities that were important in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Kanchipuram was a settlement dating back to at least the beginning of the first millennium, when it was a center for Jainism and Buddhism. It had been the capital of the Pallava kingdom for about 400 years, but just before the year 1000 it became a regional seat of the larger Chola polity. One of the more striking features of Kanchipuram is a lack of

fortification walls, even though military units were based in and around the city. There was a royal palace, which has disappeared without a trace, but most social activity surrounded several dozen temples, which served as focuses for commercial activity and habitation. Taxes on commercial groups indicate the presence of industrial and artisan production. Compacts preserved in inscriptions demonstrate the involvement of trading groups in urban affairs and temple patronage (Hall and Spencer 1980). The neighborhoods of the city were interspersed with cultivated plots, which blended insensibly into the surrounding countryside where about a hundred identifiable villages existed within ten kilometers, located in close proximity to natural and artificial water sources. One of the most important of these settlements was Uttaramerur, a brahmana collective of some antiquity located near a large artificial lake, enjoying considerable administrative autonomy and regulating agriculture and trade through a series of elected committees (Nilakantha Sastri 1932a; Champakalakshmi 1996; Heitzman 2001).

Another Chola capital, Palaiyarai, was located at the apex of the reticulated river system of the Kaveri delta, the very center of the Chola polity. Although inscriptions refer to the doorways or gates of this extensive area, there are no traces of walls or monumental architecture other than temples. In fact, it seems that temples delineated an interrelated cluster of villages that had an administrative and economic unity. Nearby, other temple villages with their own irrigation systems, mercantile settlements, and brahmana assemblies maintained an independent official existence but obviously enjoyed close economic and administrative contacts with the capital. During the several centuries after 1000, ever more complex modes of interaction linked these villages into complicated networks of donations and tax-free revenue grants (Minakshisundaranar and Sadasiva Pandarathar 1951; Champakalakshmi 1979; Heitzman 1997). Collectively they manifested the economic specializations and population densities we would associate with urbanism.

A different example is Aihole in northern Karnataka on the Malaprabha River, in the old days a major arterial with potential for supporting extensive agriculture. Aihole was already an important entrepot on the north-south overland trade route during the first millennium BCE, and by the eighth century it had attracted the patronage from kings and merchants that made it a museum of early temple architecture. During subsequent centuries it retained its significance as the putative seat of trading guilds that operated all over southern India and had links in Southeast Asia. A quadrilateral form for the settlement as a whole was absent here; instead, there were

numerous small temples constructed by political and commercial leaders, interspersed among habitation quarters (Gupte 1967; Rajasekhara 1985; Abraham 1988).

### **Problems of complexity**

At this point I would like to suggest that the model of temple economy may be limited, and that the situation within South Asia may have been more complex.

Let us look first at a place named Tirukkoyilur in Tamil Nadu, the regional seat of subordinate rulers allied to the Chola dynasty, a market center with its own commercial community, and an irrigated agricultural zone along the Pennai River. It thus manifested all the characteristics of a miniature core zone, and the two major temples here enjoyed the regular patronage and prestige one might expect in the temple economy. It is even possible to trace here the locations of temple land ownership and investment. When one looks closely at temple landholdings, however, a rather disconcerting pattern emerges: The temples controlled only a miniscule amount of the land area within the settlement or in its extensive hinterland, and large stretches of territory irrigated and controlled by cultivating castes never appear in the inscriptions, as if they remained deliberately insulated from the temple economy (Heitzman 1997, 90-99). If one extrapolates from this single, well-documented example to the agrarian economy as a whole, it appears that the temple economy and the transactions that occurred through religious institutions may have played crucial, but ultimately limited roles even within the core zones. This realization is not cause for alarm or resignation, but a reminder that the economy of South Asia in the year 1000 was a massive, changing phenomenon, allowing ample room for analytical diversity.

D. D. Kosambi practiced some of the more intriguing methodologies among South Asian historians, concentrating always on the material bases of social organization in spheres as varied as numismatics and agriculture. In one account (1965) of ethnographic field work conducted in the mountains of western Maharashtra, he was tracing the complex interactions of caste or occupational groups responsible for transporting goods up to the Deccan plateau from the coast—one of the most important trade routes in early South Asia. By investigating just one type of economic activity, the author personally encountered a wide range of cultures, languages and occupational specializations involving thousands of people. May we assume, along with Kosambi, that this scale of complexity in economic and social organization



existed 1,000 years earlier? How do we position these almost entirely illiterate and low-status groups, engaged in a mixture of agriculture, commerce, transport and pastoralism, regularly moving within and through both "core" and "peripheral" zones?

Along the same lines, one of my favorite books on South Asian history is the investigation by David Hardiman (1987) of a goddess that appeared along the border between Maharashtra and Gujarat in the early twentieth century, eventually coming to the attention of British authorities because it began to intersect with nationalist agitations. Using a combination of written accounts and oral histories gathered from elderly people, the author was able to personally walk the route of the goddess as she migrated through the lives of several dozen low-class, low-caste groups within a variety of environmental niches. His research was capable of revealing social organizations, ritual forms, occupational specializations, and subaltern agencies that several decades later would be lost to the historian.

Hardiman's study, like that of Kosambi, demonstrates a remarkable division of labor in even the most basic economic transactions, and the large numbers and types of people who easily disappear from written documentary sources. If we approach the inscriptional corpus again, after considering these more recent studies, we may note some disturbing lacunae. The kinds of people who appeared in temple donation records were necessarily the members of leading agricultural, mercantile, political and priestly families who had enough power and influence to participate in the transfer of valuable resources. Epigraphy rarely provides more than indirect references to the sorts of people that Kosambi and Hardiman were meeting.

Consider the case of animal husbandry. In the well-watered environs of temples in Tamil Nadu in the year 1000, the frequency with which waste lands on the edges of villages became donations for temples indicates that there were still wide open spaces that separated settlements even in the most densely populated regions. In those wastes there were entire societies of animal herders who appear only tangentially in the surviving records. Certainly pastoralism remained more important in drier zones.

Another group is agricultural laborers. The people appearing in the inscriptions may have managed the agrarian economy but it is unlikely that many of them touched a plow. There is every reason to believe that an entire population of low-ranking laborers, known in Tamil Nadu as *paraiyar*, lived in their own settlements and performed most of the menial tasks associated with wet rice cultivation. Outside the irrigated zones there may have been a flatter social structure, with villages inhabited mostly by cultivating groups and a less pronounced division

of labor, interacting regularly with pastoralists. Because these kinds of villages did not support stone temples, the very existence of their settlements disappears in surviving documents.

Finally, beyond the periphery, there were large geographical expanses inhabited by social groups that did not even participate in the cultural and economic world represented by the inscriptions. These were the "forest people" insulted and disliked even by Asoka, emperor of Magadha, in the third century BCE (Sircar 1967, 58). These were the Maravar or Eyinar characterized by the *Silappatikaram* in the fourth century as cattle raiders living in thatched compounds surrounded by thorn fences (Daniélou 1965, 76-85). These were the despised hunters and gatherers, typically encountered by the heroic king who became lost in the woods, in classical Sanskrit literature. One of the most important stories in South Asia is the destruction of forest habitat, the cultural and economic imperialism that has pushed the agrarian economy from the lowlands farther into the "tribal" world. In the year 1000, we have to assume that populations engaged in hunting, gathering and slash-and-burn agriculture still controlled a very large percentage of the land area in the subcontinent, with stretches of wilderness separating the peripheries of regional kingdoms.

If we add together "tribal" populations, pastoralists, and humble cultivating and laboring populations, we undoubtedly have the majority of the people living in South Asia during the year 1000, almost none of whom appear directly in the historical records of that time. We may even postulate that a very large minority, if not an absolute majority, of the population did not even participate in the temple economy. To borrow a more recent terminology, those uncounted people labored within a kind of "informal" economy that was yielding only grudgingly to the incorporative endeavors of kings, merchants, and agrarian lords.

### Regional discontinuities

The model of temple economy seems appropriate for the South Indian region that has yielded the largest amount of inscriptions, coming primarily from zones where irrigation was essential for agriculture. The model may be less appropriate the farther we move to the north and the west. Certainly the surviving temples and the inscriptions are fewer in northern India and Pakistan. There are two schools of thought here.

On one hand, it is possible that northern India originally had many more temples and that the inscriptional corpus was potentially as large as that in the south. The Chandella dynasty's cult complex at

Khajuraho, for example, is larger than any comparable site in southern India, and the surviving records of the Chandellas suggest that the basic outlines of the temple economy existed in their realm as well (Diksit 1977; Misra 1977). The fact that Khajuraho stands practically alone is possibly due to the subsequent dominance over most of northern India by Muslim dynasties that did nothing to preserve earlier architecture and that organized systems of ritual prestation around Islamic institutions. This view suggests, then, that the historical evidence for the temple economy once important in northern India has mostly disappeared.

On the other hand, it is possible that the temple economy never existed in northern India, religious institutions in the ninth and tenth centuries played a decidedly secondary role in the overall economy, and that there was never any temple/inscription complex. The work of B. D. Chattopadhyaya (1994), for example, utilizes quite fragmentary inscriptional materials to trace the patterns of town development in selected areas of northern India, without concentrating on the roles of religious institutions. He looks at economic growth through the business decisions of commercial groups and through the production and movement of goods. The important evidence here includes lists of products, the people who manufactured them, and where they were available. This is an approach to economy that seems quite similar to that of the British agents who wrote early reports on South Asian business, providing a welcome tonic to the more "culturalist" perspective that starts from temples.

Rather than vitiating the concept of the temple economy, this perspective may enrich our understanding of a multifaceted interaction between production, commerce and culture in South Asia. There were, perhaps, two main blocs of economy and culture – one stretching from northern India through Pakistan into west and central Asia, another stretching from eastern and southern India through Southeast Asia.

## **Conclusion**

The limited portion of the South Asian economy that remains visible to us was pulsating with growth and activity in the year 1000. Regional kingdoms were expanding the scope of their activities and the amount of resources commanded by increasingly complex institutional forms. Local and intermediary leaderships from the agrarian economy were paying for architecture and for ritual expression of their dominant positions, bestowing on posterity a giant heritage of temple art. Temple staffs were investing capital in business ventures and land development

schemes that expanded the bounds of irrigation systems and revenue lands. If all this activity represents, hypothetically, only five percent of the total "formal" economy, then the tenth and eleventh centuries were a time of dramatic economic growth. Indeed, the growing density of the inscriptional corpus, and the increasing scope of political, mercantile and religious institution-building described therein, suggest clearly that this kind of expansion continued for at least five centuries thereafter. The addition to this "formal" economy of the activities conducted by pastoralists, swidden cultivators, hunters and gatherers creates a picture of unparalleled complexity and energy.

It is less clear that economic growth in South Asia was a new type or a new level of expansion. It is more likely that the historian obtains around the year 1000 some new perspectives on phenomena that had been growing steadily at least since the sixth century, through the elaboration of a peculiarly South Asian configuration of institutional development from the base upward. The attraction of the Ghaznavids from the northwest and the emergence of the Cholas in the southeast represent just the upper edge of a political system resting on an economic dynamism evolving over the long duration.

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## **Chapter 10**

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### **Trade Under the Sign of the Feathered Serpent: Mesoamerica's Route into the Second Millennium<sup>1</sup>**

**Andreas Brockmann**

The borders of Mesoamerica around 1000 were to a large extent open. It was a region politically divided into small city-states of various sizes, united only by the belief in the spiritual force of the feathered serpent (Brockmann 1999). Largely through archaeological evidence, we know today that the trade relationships among city-states constituted a complex network that went far beyond regional obligations of tribute. Trade networks developed into well-traveled arteries that nourished and sustained nearly the entire cultural region. Long-distance trade linked Mexico with North America, Central America and Yucatan. From Tabasco eastwards to Yucatan, Belize and Central America, transportation by sea was the choice of most traders. By contrast, in the Guatemalan highlands, Chiapas and southern North America, trade routes were almost exclusively on land. The uncovering of these routes

– the medium allowing the spread of the feathered serpent cult – is still in process. Results of various recent studies, however, suggest the need for a broad-based analysis of these relationships.<sup>2</sup>

In Mexico, the city of Tollan, identified as the base of the Toltecs, can be seen as the successor to Teotihuacan, even though it never became as large. Its trade relations extended eastward all the way to Central America, centered on obsidian. The Toltecs carried on this eastern trade with seafaring Maya, who controlled the routes along the Atlantic coast. From the north, turquoise made its way to Tollan along trade routes protected by garrisons such as La Quemada.

For those living in the Maya region, marked by the decline of culture in the lowlands, this was an era of great change (Brockmann 1999). Towns on the periphery of the area ruled by Maya lowland city-states survived the demise of the classic Mayan culture relatively unscathed because of their different economic orientation, and in particular, their focus on long-distance trade. (That settlements like Lamanai in Belize were able to survive testifies to the validity of this hypothesis.) Similarly, small eastern cities with access to the sea and its trade routes were spared attacks from the west that led to the demise of the Petén Maya, ravaged by warriors who were able to use rivers – the Petén inland trade routes – in order to reach and destroy settlements.

### **Mexican and Maya traders**

For the most part, scholars have focused on the very important relationship at this time between the central Mexican peoples and the Maya, and in particular between the urban centers Tollan and Chichén Itzá. Because these cities had certain architectural and mythological traditions in common, it was first assumed that the Toltecs had advanced to Yucatan and refashioned Chichén Itzá in their own style to meet their needs. According to this hypothesis, the Itzá were in reality Toltecs who had followed the legendary migration of Quetzalcoatl. Some scholars have disagreed with this theory on the grounds that Tollan was considerably smaller (therefore less significant) and somewhat newer than Chichén Itzá. They developed a counter-theory, whereby Tollan was regarded as an outpost of Chichén Itzá. The “Putun hypothesis” combined the above-mentioned approaches with evidence from linguistic and colonial sources, taking more fully into account the places of origin for rare or extraordinary goods found during archaeological excavations. According to this model, various groups of “Mexicanized” Maya started to advance from the Gulf Coast

towards Yucatan near the end of the Classic Period. These groups, named Putun, or more recently, Chontal Maya, specialized in coastal shipping as "trade warriors" controlling transport at critical junctures between land and sea routes. They are also believed to have participated in the conversion of Chichén Itzá. At present, the "Putun hypothesis" based on "Mexicanized" coastal Maya is the most widely accepted theory. At the same time, however, some still assume that the Itzá originated from the north of Yucatan and that the remaking of the city simply represented a continuation of a local traditions (Sabloff et al. 1974; Quezada and Julia Rivas 1981; Kepecs et al. 1994, 144).

Concerning the long-distance trade routes leading from Tollan to Chichén Itzá, and primarily those between the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and northern Yucatan, the inclusion of other large centers within this network, e.g., El Tajín in Veracruz, is still not certain due to the lack of proper data.<sup>3</sup> It seems likely, however, that goods from this city were already loaded onto boats far to the west of Tabasco; in this case, the Isla de los Sacrificios would have special significance as a possible island port. At first, goods from Tollan made their way as far as Tabasco overland on the backs of porters, at which point the goods were then loaded on ships (The Aztecs, among others, later used this route).<sup>4</sup> The Chontal living there maintained several well-protected trade centers, such as Potonchán, Xicalango, Tixchel and Itzamkanac. From these ports, goods traveled to many different points of the Maya region. With their central and strategically favorable settlements, both on the coast and at key river mouths, the Chontal were able to exercise control over long-distance trade for several centuries. They also controlled areas in and around the mouths of the rivers leading to the Petén (Vargas Pacheco 1998, 269 f.). The Itzá, who were living further to the northeast, were also intent on building an extensive network of outposts along the coast of Yucatan. They controlled not only local maritime resources, including salt, but also established military bases through which they dominated sections of the coastal trade (Andrews 1990, 161).

Unfortunately, pictorial representations of these traders have only very rarely been uncovered. The deteriorated murals of the Chichén Itzá warrior temple provide a good picture of the transportation modes of that time, portraying small canoes filled with goods and porters carrying goods.<sup>5</sup> Also, in Cacaxtla in the Central Mexican highlands during the Classic Period, there is a mural of a trader with a basket (Andrews 1998, 23).

## The Seaports

Scholars have identified more than 400 pre-Hispanic settlements on the coast of the Yucatan peninsula. Evidence of Postclassic settlements has been found in about 150 of these. Roughly 50 functioned as seaports, including the following significant sites (Figure 1):

- Xicalango, Tixchel and Champotón in the Mexican state of Campeche;
- Xcambó, Isla Cerritos, Emal, El Cuyo, and Chiquila in the north of the Yucatan peninsula;
- Ecab, El Meco, Cancún, Mulchi, Playa del Carmen, Xcaret, various settlements on the island of Cozumel, Xelhá, Tulum, Muyil/Chunyaxché, San Miguel de Ruz, Chamax, Chacmool and Ichpaatún-Tamalcab in the Mexican state of Quintana Roo;
- Santa Rita Corazal, Sarteneja, Marco Gonzales, Colson's Point, Placencia and Wild Cane Cay in Belize.

In addition, Andrews (1998, 18) includes Nito in Guatemala and the inland port of Naco in Honduras, but not the settlements on the Bay Islands.<sup>6</sup> Recent archaeological evidence indicates that not all of these ports were equally important around the beginning of the second millennium. Xcambó, for example, declined in importance as a center of salt production and trade between 800 and 1200 (Sierra Sosa 1999, 26). The people of Chichén Itzá must have relied on other seaports and salt works during this time.

On the basis of archaeological findings, Andrews (1998) believes there were probably five basic types of ports, i.e., those for trading, transit, island ferries, coastal ports serving key inland cities, and multi-functional ports. The distinctions between these categories remain very unclear, which tends to lead to an overuse of the residual category, multi-functional ports.

In part, the nature of the relationships between inland cities and smaller coastal seaports has recently been brought to light. Chichén Itzá, for example, relied on the northern island of Isla Cerritos as its trading outpost, while Marco Gonzales served the same purpose for the city of Lamanai. During the Postclassic Period, Lamanai imported obsidian from Guatemala, pottery from northern Yucatan and a variety of other goods, all of which were probably transported along the New River. From the twelfth century on, copper objects originating in western and central Mexico, Oaxaca and southern parts of Central America also appeared among these goods. It has been more difficult to document the goods were exported from Lamanai because it did not



Figure 1. Trade routes in the eastern part of Mesoamerica (Andrews 1998)

possess any unusual or easily identifiable materials; we do know that pottery from Lamanai made its way to northern Yucatan and other cities of today's Belize. The small town of Marco González, at the southern tip of Ambergris Bay on the Barrier Reef, served as a coastal trading post for Lamanai. After enjoying its heyday during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, this port remained permanently settled until the arrival of the Spanish in 1544 (Edwards 1978; Pendergast 1986, 1990).

## Trade goods

In order to reconstruct the trade routes that existed in 1000, it is helpful to use goods with identifiable origins as indicators. It also helps if these goods can be found easily and in abundance. Ideally, they are exotic luxury items for the importers and commodity-like goods for the exporters. Naturally, certain luxury items, such as gold, tumbaga, jade and turquoise are almost never found near the surface of archaeological excavations. The same applies to amber, which had great significance in pre-Hispanic times as jewelry for high-ranking individuals. The highlands of Chiapas are, to date, the only known source of this raw material (Blom 1959, 24).<sup>7</sup>

Everyday goods, which of course played a major role in trade, until now have not helped us to reconstruct the conditions at that time. For example, the goods that the peoples of north Yucatan traded in exchange for obsidian, which they did not have locally, remain largely unknown. Historical sources, such as the *Relación* of the inland settlements Sotuta and Tibolon, do refer to brisk long-distance trade centered around basic goods.<sup>8</sup> This system, which was based on cotton products, wax, honey and salt in exchange for cocoa, extended on the one hand to Tabasco and on the other hand to Guatemala. Diego de Landa (1524-1579) described slaves among the other articles of trade. He also mentioned other luxury items, such as chains with round stones that were worn as jewelry and a kind of "seashell money."<sup>9</sup> For Tabasco, which lay between Yucatan and Tollan, the picture was different, for the people specialized exclusively in growing and exporting cocoa.<sup>10</sup> Historical trade routes only based on salt have been shown to be even more extensive, as reported by the *Relación* of Tabi and Chunchuhub.<sup>11</sup> The main reason behind the strong demand for this good must have been its high quality, which has been substantiated by the *Relación* of Merida,<sup>12</sup> among others, and has also been proven archaeologically (Andrews 1983). The salt works at Emal were probably the key source in northern Yucatan around the 1000, presumably controlled by the Itzá (Kepecs et al. 1994, 149).

Ceramics have not proven especially good for documenting long-distance trade, although Fahmel (1988) made an attempt, but sometimes they have demonstrated special features that clearly reveal their origin. Production methods that were only possible with the use of certain raw materials can, in theory, provide this indicator, and therefore have been the subject of recent work. The inclusion of volcanic ash, for example, could provide important evidence because this method was only used between the late Classic and early

Postclassic periods in Yucatan. However, the origin of the material, which very likely did not come from the region, remains uncertain (Kepecs et al. 1994, 151).

## **Obsidian**

Obsidian has generally served as an indicator for place of origin and for dating (Freter 1993) in the analysis of long-distance trade. Originating in the highlands of central Mexico and Guatemala, around 1000 it was used throughout Mesoamerica as a raw material for the production of weapons, cutting devices, and jewelry (Trombold et al. 1993). When obsidian appears in the archaeological records of northern Yucatan, we can assume external influences with a high level of certainty because natural sources are absent there. What other goods were traded for obsidian and made their way out of Yucatan can only be deduced with the help of historical sources. The following discussion attempts to retrace the trade in obsidian and its implications for understanding larger issues of exchange.

Almost invariably at the heart of recent research lies Isla Cerritos. This island was involved in long-distance trading as far back as 100 BCE, but reached the peak of its significance between 750 and 1200. In this era, the inhabitants imported grinding stones made of basalt, obsidian, jade, turquoise, copper and tumbaga, all of which came from distant regions. The island, which was perhaps 200 meters in width, was completely built up and surrounded by a low wall. A semicircular wall, about 330 meters long, extended 80 meters into the sea across from the southern jetty. About five kilometers to the east, there is a stretch of water protected by a large tongue of land, leading to the salt works of Emal, presumably the most important at that time. Isla Cerritos, only 500 meters from the mainland, also had a relationship with a smaller mainland settlement, Paso del Cerro, which was linked with regional transportation routes and had a channel that connected flood-endangered stretches with protected dry land. A smaller path led to a well, which presumably provided water for inhabitants of the island. This seaport may have been directly connected with Chichén Itzá and served as the latter city's point of maritime contact with the outside world (Gallareta 1998).

The excavations of 1984-1985 on Isla Cerritos uncovered 109 obsidian objects, including 103 blade fragments. Of these, 69 came from dated stratigraphic contexts (Andrews et al. 1989, 355). The origins of 34 Classic black and brown pieces among the 69 were

analyzed, the results indicating that one-third of these items stem from Guatemala and two-thirds from Central Mexico (Table 1).<sup>13</sup> In a second analytical step, 31 green obsidian pieces also found at Isla Cerritos were determined to have come from the Pachuca mines and were thus included in the sample. This increased the Central Mexican portion to 82 percent.

| Place of origin       | Number of artifacts | Percent from place of origin |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Guatemala</b>      |                     |                              |
| El Chayal             | 9                   | 26                           |
| Ixtepeque             | 2                   | 6                            |
| <b>Central Mexico</b> |                     |                              |
| Ucareo                | 18                  | 53                           |
| Zaragoza              | 3                   | 9                            |
| Pico de Orizaba       | 1                   | 3                            |
| <b>Unknown</b>        | 1                   | 3                            |
| <b>Total</b>          | 34                  | 100                          |

Table 1. Classic obsidian fragments from Isla Cerritos  
(Andrews et al. 1989, 358)

For the early Postclassic period (900-1200), there were 40 obsidian fragments that could be classified by mine (Table 2). Of these fragments, 20 percent came from Guatemala and 77.5 percent from Central Mexico. Because this result differs dramatically from other well-known Mayan lowland data in which Guatemalan obsidian dominates, we can conclude that trade routes linked Isla Cerritos very closely with Central Mexico. Similar close ties with Mexico characterize the allocations of obsidian at Chichén Itzá (although the analysis, still in progress, rests on only 26 undated green obsidian pieces). We may conclude that Isla Cerritos and Chichén Itzá maintained a close trading relationship. It was only after the demise of Chichén Itzá around 1200 that Guatemalan obsidian regained its position of supremacy (Andrews et al. 1989, 358, 361).



| Place of origin       | Number of artifacts | Percent from place of origin |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Guatemala</b>      |                     |                              |
| El Chayal             | 7                   | 17.5                         |
| Ixtepeque             | 1                   | 2.5                          |
| <b>Central Mexico</b> |                     |                              |
| Pachuca               | 18                  | 45                           |
| Ucareo                | 11                  | 27.5                         |
| Zaragoza              | 2                   | 5                            |
| <b>Unknown</b>        | 1                   | 2.5                          |
| <b>Total</b>          | 40                  | 100                          |

Table 2. Postclassic obsidian fragments from Isla Cerritos (Andrews et al. 1989, 361)<sup>14</sup>

When we compare these data with material from the southern part of the peninsula, we recognize the strong, uninterrupted influence of Guatemala (Table 3). For Becan and Chicana in the southeast of Campeche, the allocation of obsidian artifacts is similar, i.e. 81 percent in Becan and 95 percent in Chicana came from Guatemalan mines. Central Mexican sources were much less significant.

Putting maritime routes aside for the moment and turning to the highlands of Chiapas, which were presumably an intermediate region for direct long-distance trade with Central America, we can expect certain shifts in the origin of obsidian here as well. In the late Classic period (Table 4), at Largatero and Yerba Buena the proportion of Guatemalan material is overwhelmingly large – 99 percent of the sample of 1,554 pieces – with the remainder randomly distributed. For the early Postclassic period (Table 5), the share of Central Mexican obsidian increases to 18.9 percent. Zinapécuaro was the most important of the western mines of this region, of which Zaragoza also was a part. Among the Guatemalan places of origin, San Martín Jilotepec lost its supremacy and declined to the level of El Chayal, while the other mines maintained the importance they had gained during the late Classic period.

A broad-based comparison conducted recently provides important data for our analysis (Table 6).<sup>15</sup> During the terminal Classic period, the coastal regions of the Yucatan peninsula depended almost entirely

| Place of origin       | Percent from place of origin |         |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|---------|
|                       | Becan                        | Chicana |
| <b>Guatemala</b>      |                              |         |
| El Chayal             | 71                           | 73      |
| Ixtepeque             | 10                           | 22      |
| <b>Central Mexico</b> |                              |         |
| Zaragoza              | 15                           | 3       |
| Zinapécuaro           |                              | 3       |
| Altotonga             | 4                            |         |
| <b>Total</b>          | 100                          | 100     |

Table 3. Obsidian of the late Classic period in the southeast of Campeche (Clark and Lee 1980, 340)<sup>16</sup>

| Place of origin       | Percent from place of origin |  |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|--|
|                       |                              |  |
| <b>Guatemala</b>      |                              |  |
| San Martín Jilotepec  | 60                           |  |
| El Chayal             | 38                           |  |
| Ixtepeque             | 1                            |  |
| <b>Sub-total</b>      | 99                           |  |
| <b>Central Mexico</b> |                              |  |
| Zinapécuaro           | 0.5                          |  |
| Pachuca               | 0.5                          |  |
| <b>Sub-total</b>      | 1                            |  |

Table 4. Obsidian of the late Classic period from the highlands of Chiapas (Clark and Lee 1980, 340)

| <b>Place of origin</b> | <b>Percent from place of origin</b> |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Guatemala</b>       |                                     |
| San Martín Jilotepec   | 0.41                                |
| El Chayal              | 0.38                                |
| Ixtepeque              | 1.40                                |
| <b>Sub-total</b>       | <b>80.40</b>                        |
| <b>Central Mexico</b>  |                                     |
| Zinapécuaro            | 0.15                                |
| Pachuca                | 0.03                                |
| Zaragoza               | 0.90                                |
| <b>Sub-total</b>       | <b>18.90</b>                        |
| <b>Unknown</b>         | <b>0.50</b>                         |

Table 5. Obsidian of the early Postclassic period from the highlands of Chiapas (Clark & Lee 1980, 340)<sup>17</sup>

on Guatemalan mines for their obsidian: 82.5 percent in the northern Maya region and 86.8 percent in Belize. For these areas, El Chayal was the largest supplier. In contrast, Laguna Zope drew 98 percent of its obsidian from Central Mexican sources, primarily from Zaragoza and Pico de Orizaba.<sup>18</sup>

Moving into the Postclassic period, the sourcing of obsidian began to undergo a general transformation. Belize grew increasingly dependent on Guatemala as a raw materials supplier, drawing a total of 98.8 percent from Guatemalan mines. Ixtepeque provided 95.1 percent of this obsidian, relegating El Chayal to a distinctly marginal role. Chiapas was also highly dependent on Guatemalan obsidian, although it drew its supplies from a broader range of sources. Laguna Zope's dependence on Guatemalan obsidian rose to a total of 10 percent. Its main source in Mexico shifted from Zaragoza to Pico de Orizaba, which provided 52 percent of the obsidian. The most radical change in supply appears in the northern Mayan region, which drew

| Place of origin              | Northern<br>Maya area |      | Belize |      | Soconusco/<br>Chiapas |      | Central<br>Depression |      | Laguna Zope/<br>Oaxaca |      |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|------|--------|------|-----------------------|------|-----------------------|------|------------------------|------|
|                              | TC                    | EP   | TC     | EP   | TC                    | EP   | TC                    | EP   | TC                     | EP   |
| <b>Guatemala</b>             |                       |      |        |      |                       |      |                       |      |                        |      |
| San Martin Jilotepeque (SMJ) | 0.7                   |      | 0.6    | 0.3  |                       | 51.0 |                       | 60.1 |                        | 5.0  |
| El Chayal (EC)               | 70.8                  | 19.3 | 65.8   | 3.4  |                       | 6.5  |                       | 28.7 |                        | 5.0  |
| Ixtepeque (IXT)              | 11.0                  | 5.3  | 20.4   | 95.1 |                       | 1.3  |                       | 2.0  | 2.0                    |      |
| Tajumulco (TAJ)              |                       |      |        |      |                       | 12.6 |                       |      |                        |      |
| <b>Central Mexico</b>        |                       |      |        |      |                       |      |                       |      |                        |      |
| Pachuca (PAC)                | 2.9                   | 38.6 | 9.3    |      |                       | 2.6  |                       | 3.2  | 2.0                    | 5.0  |
| Zaragoza (ZAR)               | 5.8                   | 3.5  |        |      |                       |      |                       | 0.1  | 60.0                   | 19.0 |
| Altotonga (ALT)              | 2.2                   |      |        |      |                       |      |                       |      | 18.0                   | 5.0  |
| Ucareo (UCA)                 | 5.1                   | 26.3 | 1.3    | 0.3  |                       |      |                       |      |                        |      |
| Zinapécuaro (ZIN)            |                       | 3.5  |        |      |                       | 4.0  |                       | 4.6  |                        |      |
| Pico de Orizaba (PDO)        | 0.7                   |      |        |      |                       |      |                       |      | 7.0                    | 52.0 |
| Zacualtipan (ZAC)            | 0.7                   |      |        |      |                       | 0.7  |                       | 0.1  |                        | 5.0  |
| Otumba (OTM)                 |                       | 1.8  |        |      |                       | 0.7  |                       |      | 7.0                    | 5.0  |
| Paredon (PAR)                |                       |      |        |      |                       |      |                       |      |                        |      |
| <b>Miscellaneous</b>         |                       |      |        |      |                       |      |                       |      |                        |      |
|                              |                       |      |        |      |                       | 1.0  |                       |      |                        |      |
| <b>Unknown</b>               |                       |      |        |      |                       |      |                       |      |                        |      |
|                              | 1.8                   |      | 2.6    |      |                       | 0.7  |                       | 1.3  | 4.0                    |      |
| <b>Number of Artifacts</b>   | 137                   | 57   | 313    | 385  | -                     | 151  | -                     | 1413 | ?                      | ?    |

Table 6: The transition from the terminal Classic (TC) to the early Postclassic (EP) period; percentages of obsidian finds.

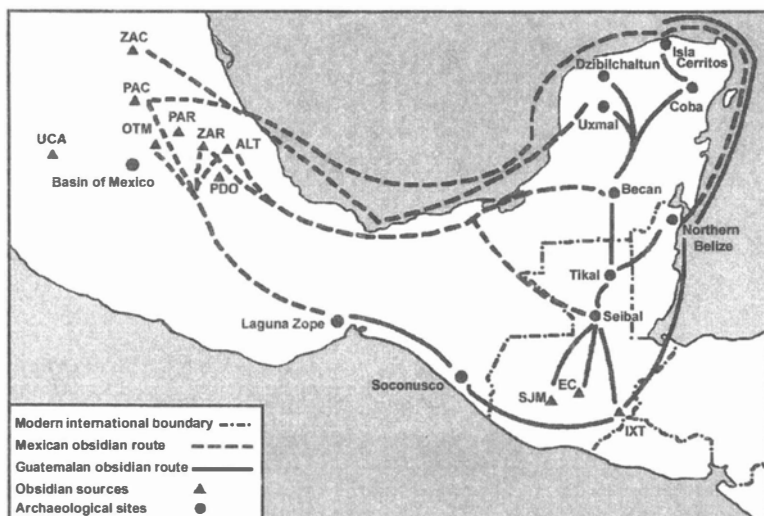


Figure 2. Exchange of obsidian in the terminal Classic period. See also Table 6 (Nelson and Clark 1988, 298)

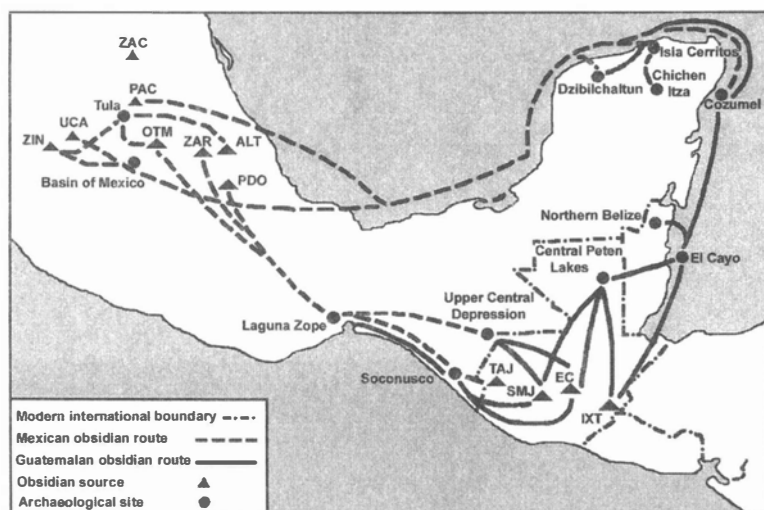


Figure 3. Exchange of obsidian in the early Postclassic period. See also Table 6 (Nelson and Clark 1988, 301)

only 24.6 of its obsidian from Guatemala; in comparison, Pachuca (38.6 percent) and Ucareo (26.3 percent) in Central Mexico were the preferred sources. Based on these data, Figures 2 and 3 show the shifts in the contours of this trade around the year 1000 (Nelson 1980).

Because obsidian is a typical Mesoamerican raw material, we are able to conclude from this evidence with some confidence that long-distance trade routes shifted significantly during this transition from the terminal Classic to the Postclassic. On the other hand, there are surely more obsidian mines to be discovered and analyzed in Central Mexico, Guatemala and neighboring regions. In addition, there are major differences in the processing of the materials (Sheets et al. 1990; Cobean 1998; Darling and Glascock 1998). Finally, who controlled the Guatemalan mines after the demise of Kaminalijuyu remains an important unknown.

### **Trade routes**

We assume that specialists carried on the trade to and from the Mexican highlands. These traders from Tollan, along with their porters, made their way in the east to the ports of Tabasco and the cities of the eastern highlands, and to the north to settlements of the Hohokam culture (Figure 4).

To reach the east by land, they travelled through the highlands of Chiapas to the coast and to neighboring Guatemala (Köhler 1978). In addition, there seems to have been a route along the Pacific Coast (Navarette 1978). Knowledge of these trade routes was passed down orally and sometimes in written form as "maps." The conquistador Hernán Cortés, for example, wrote in his fifth letter from Tabasco (September 3, 1526):

Y me hicieron una figura en un paño de toda ella, por la cual me pareció que yo podía andar mucha parte de ella...De esta provincia de Cupilcon, según la figura que los de Tabasco y Xacalango me dieron, había de ir a otra que se llama Zagoatán; y como ellos no se sirven sino por agua, no sabían el camino que yo debía de llevar por tierra, aunque me señalaban en el derecho que estaba la dicha provincia . . . (Cortés 1963, 243, 245).

He thus provided evidence that beyond Laguna de Terminos, all goods were probably transported by ship.

The main route to North America in this period seems to have run from Tollan through Teuchitlán-Ahualulco, Chametla, Culiacan, Guasave

and Casas Grandes. This represents a slight westward shift of the route of the Classic Period, which had tracked through La Quemada and Chalchihuites (Cabrero 1991, 194; Kelley 1983). Traders followed rivers, like the Río Bolanos, which offered relief on this long mountainous route (Cabrero 1998). Recently, researchers have been

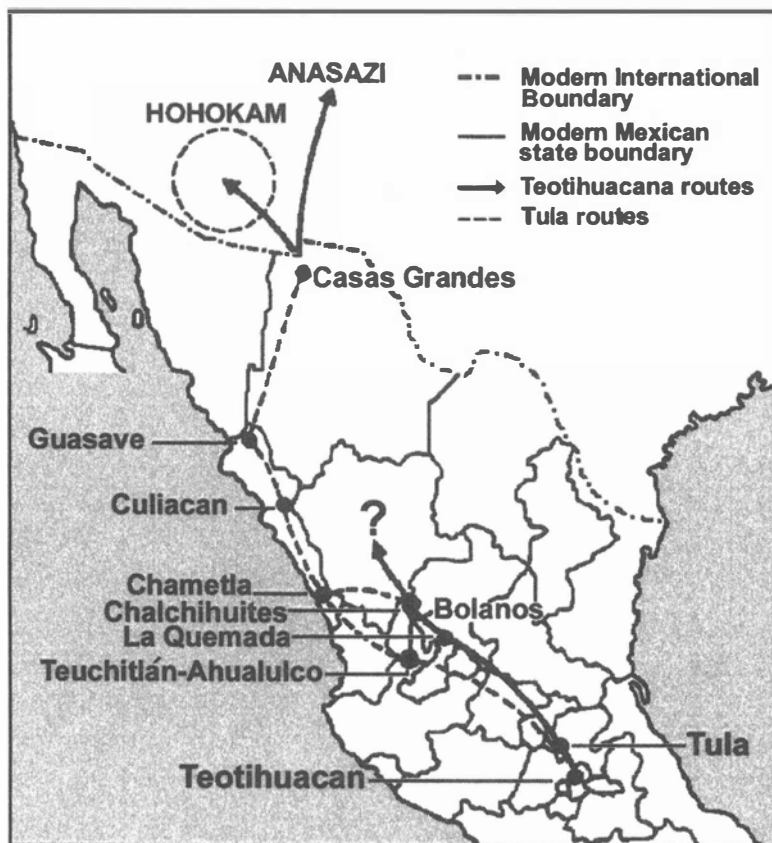


Figure 4. Routes of trade in the northern part of Mesoamerica (Cabrero 1991:194)

trying to uncover smaller trade networks in northern Mexico by tracing, for example, obsidian production and trade in the highland lakes region of Jalisco (Spence, Weigand and Soto 1980). According to Molitor (1979, 163), such trade relationships not only strengthened the northern cultures economically, but also possibly led to Toltecs settling there and take a strong hand in the development of Hohokam.

In the northern regions of Yucatan, paved roads (*sacbeob*) testify to the existence of important, long-term commercial and diplomatic relationships. During recent excavations in Chichén Itzá, more than 20 new roads were discovered, some of which interconnected centers of the city's large ceremonial districts (Schmidt 1994, 22; 1998). Roads between larger centers have been known for a long time, such as that between Cobá and Yaxunhá (Villa Rojas 1985, 573 ff.). Small buildings along the way and easily reachable watering places indicate the far-sightedness of their planning. Other connections include those between Ucí and Cansahcab, Aké and Izmal, and Uxmal, Nohpat and Kabah (Maldonado 1995). These roads are of great significance not only because of their sophisticated construction, but also because of their spectacular entrance arches. An outstanding example of this can be seen on the road connecting Kabah and Uxmal, where arches mark the beginning of the traveler's journey into another dimension (Blom 1930; Smith and Ruppert 1954).<sup>19</sup> Not surprisingly, smaller coastal settlements also integrated themselves in this system. Xcambo, for example, linked itself in this way with Xtampú, Cemul and Misnay (Sierra 1999, 19). The salt-works of Punta Canbalam in the north of Campeche could be reached through a *sacbe* originating in the city of Chunchucmil (Dahlin et al. 1978, 72 f.).

To get to Central America, there were several alternative routes for crossing through Chiapas (Figure 5). As Köhler (1978, 72) has noted, "It would be wrong to assume the existence of a simple unchanging route. The route probably varied according to the contingencies of the given political and military situation, passing during certain periods through the mountains of the Serrania Central, during others along the Grijalva valley." To the south of the traditional trade routes, an alternate route reached Guatemala and even El Salvador. Because the Pacific was too dangerous to travel, traders forged an inland route, which followed narrow waterways interconnected by natural and artificial canals and led over short stretches of land. Navarrete (1998) described travels on this water system from Cabeza de Torro to Suchiate,<sup>20</sup> and recent excavations at the Pacific coast of Guatemala seem to attest to its existence. A number of smaller outposts found there were believed to have protected access to the route leading into the Guatemalan highlands (Estrada et al. 1997). Cortés reported that he passed such crossing points between land and waterways in Tabasco.<sup>21</sup> In addition, there were also ferries that provided services at important river crossings (Ball and Brockington 1978; McVicker 1978; Lee Whiting 1998).



Most routes between Tabasco and Honduras along the Atlantic coast ran, to a large extent, in protected waters, requiring traders to leave them for at most one or two days per voyage. On the Pacific coast, in contrast, there were comparatively few long-distance trading expeditions, due to the aforementioned dangers. The principal mode of transportation in sea trade was a dugout powered by a large number of paddlers. The only vehicle that we know with certainty existed at that time was a dugout capable of carrying between 40 and 50 people and made of hardwood, usually caoba. In such a canoe it was possible to travel up to 60 kilometers daily, which was approximately the distance from the coast of Honduras to the Bay Islands (Vargas Pacheco and Ochoa 1982; Andrews 1998, 18).

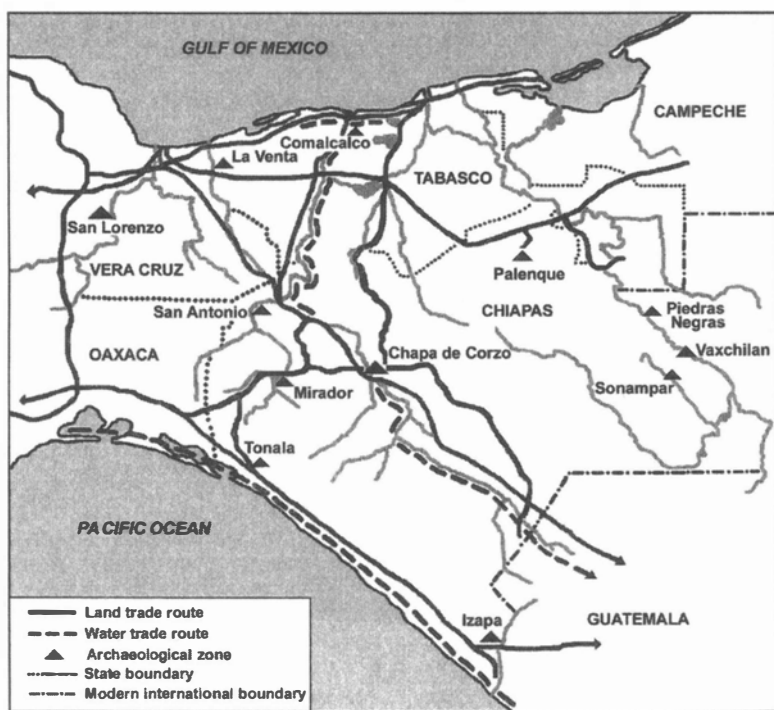


Figure 5. Trade routes through Chiapas (Lee Whiting 1988, 240)

In addition to the “maps” mentioned above, traders may have used other navigational tools.<sup>22</sup> On the flat, relatively unvaried coast of Yucatan, tall buildings of coastal cities served as navigation markers

for sea travelers. Such buildings can be found in Quintana Roo at Tancah, Tulum, Tupah and on the island of Capechén. We can also assume that towns marked their harbor entrances and dangerous stretches of water to help guide travelers to shore. Historical sources indicate that people also used fire and smoke signals for the same purpose (Romero 1998, 14).

## Conclusion

By combining limited historical data with archaeological research, it is possible to reconstruct long-distance trade routes in Mesoamerica around the beginning of the second millennium. If we look at trade in obsidian, for example, and add evidence for the rapid spread of the cult of the feathered serpent, it is clear that central Mexican influence was becoming an increasingly significant factor throughout Mesoamerica at this time. In spite of a weak political structure, these streams of influence flowed through the whole cultural area and united it.

## Notes

1. For a similar analysis see Brockmann (2000).
2. Given the generally strong interest in Mesoamerican trade, the amount of publications is extensive, including numerous articles, as well as anthologies by Lee and Navarrete (1978), Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología (1980) and Rattray (1998). For a more extensive and methodic-theoretical examination of this topic see the anthology by Earle and Ericson (1977).
3. Rinke (1992, 49) found during her excavations in El Tajín 361 objects, of which only one seems to come from Pachuca. She estimates that the rest of the gray pieces originate from Caltonac in Puebla.
4. According to Bernardino de Sahagún (d. 1590), "Todas estas cosas traían los mercaderes de aquella provincia de Xicalango para el señor de México...Hacían sus viajes los mercaderes de México que llamaban *tecunenenque*, yendo a aquella tierra de Anáhuac, que está cerca de enemigos de los mexicanos. El señor de México quería mucho a estos mercaderes, tenía los como a hijos, como a personas nobles y muy avisadas y esforzadas" (Sahagún 1981, libro 9, cap. 4, § 10).
5. These paintings were reconstructed by Morris (1931, pl. 139, 159). Because this book is very hard to look at, the work of Lombardo (1998) is recommended, which also shows details of the painting.
6. For a listing of 55 coastal settlements in Campeche and Yucatan see the study of Eaton (1978).

7. From historical sources we know that the trading of amber from Chiapas was a very demanding business: "La razón por que cierta parte de los mercaderes se llamó *naualoztomeca* es, que antes que se conquistase la provincia de Tzinacatlan los mercaderes mexicanos que entraba a tratar en aquella provincia disimulados, tomaban el traje y lenguaje de la misma provincia, y con esto trataban entre ellos sin ser conocidos" (Sahagún 1981, libro 9, cap. 5, § 1, 2). Whether similar conditions prevailed before the Aztecs, however, is not clear.

8. "Las contrataciones de esta tierra son pocas y así el trato es de mantas de algodón y cera y miel y sal que se llevan a México y a otras partes, de donde traen mercaderías para españoles [e] indios, como son mantas de lana y guaypiles [huipil] y cacao de Tabasco y Guatemala" (Magaña 1983, 149).

9. de Landa states, "El oficio a que más inclinados estaban es el de mercaderes llevando sal, y ropas y esclavos a tierra de Ulúa y Tabasco trocándolo todo por cacao y cuentas de piedra que eran su moneda, y con ésta solían comprar esclavos u otras cuentas más finas y buenas, las cuales traían sobre sí los señores como joyas en las fiestas; y tenían por moneda y joyas otras hechas de ciertas conchas coloradas, y las traían en sus bolsas de red que tenían." Unfortunately, he abstains from further explanations of pre-Hispanic means of payment in Yucatan, writing only, "trocándolo por cacao y cuentas de piedra que eran su moneda...y tenían por moneda y joyas otras hechas de ciertas conchas coloradas, y las traían en sus bolsas de red que tenían" (de Landa 1982, 39).

10. "En toda esta provincia no se coge sal ninguna, y así se provee de las provincias de Yucatán, de donde se trae en cantidad, así para el sustento como para las colambres que esta tierra hay y habrá de hoy más a causa de las estancias que se han poblado y pueblan por la tierra adentro. Traen asimismo de la dicha provincia mucha ropa de la tierra como es manta güpil [huipil] y cera porque aunque en esta tierra se da el algodón, no se puede sembrar, ni coger, ni hilar, ni hacer mantas, a causa de que siempre andan ocupados en el beneficio del cacao y custodia de él, estando en el árbol antes de maduro porque le comen los monos y ardillas y otros animalejos, y los papagayos, y así los hombres como las mujeres e hijos siempre andan ocupados los unos en la guardia y los otros cogiendo y beneficiando el cacao" (Cabildo de la Villa de Santa María de la Victoria 1983, 429).

11. "En la mayor parte de la costa que cae hacia el norte se saca mucha sal de la salinas, las cuales en tiempo antiguo fueron comunes como el día de hoy lo son. Llévase mucha sal de esta tierra a México, a Tabasco y a Honduras y otras partes" (García 1983, 166).

12. "Hay en toda la costa de estas provincias muchas salinas, donde naturalmente, sin ninguna industria humana, se cría grandísima cantidad de sal blanca como la nieve y de muy lindo sabor, de lo cual se provee toda esta tierra y es común a indios y españoles, y llévase por mar a otras muchas partes en navíos que vienen a cargo de ello" (Palomar 1983, 81).

13. Unfortunately, the chronological classification of these objects produced only 14 for the Terminal Classic to the early Postclassic period (ca.750), a sample too small about which to draw reasonable conclusions.

14. In the original table, differing, inaccurate percentages are mentioned.

15. In this description, only archaeological sites with more than 30 obsidian fragments were included.

16. The sample includes approximately 218 fragments and originates from the locations Tenam Rosario, Chinkultik, Tenam Puente, Moxviquil and Santa Marta.

17. Nelson and Clark 1998, 281-84. The following locations in the northern Maya area were considered in Table 6: Becan, Cancun, Chicanna, Chichén Itzá, Chunchuhub, Coba, Cozumel, Dzibilchaltun, Dzibilnocac, Edzna, Hochob, Isla Cerritos, Labna, Loltun Cave, Santa Rosa Xtampak, Tulum, and Uxmal. The following locations in Belize were considered: Altun Ha, Ambergris Cay, Barton Ramie, Benque Viejo, Cerros, Chacben K'ak, Colha, El Pozito, Frenchman's Cay, Kalkache, Labaantun, Maintzunun, Moho Cay, Nohmul, Nohock Ek, Placencia Lagoon, Punta Placencia, San Juan-Ambergris Cay, Stann Creek Distrikt, Weston Site 6, and Wild Cane Cay. In the case of Laguna Zope, the Phases Tuxum and Aguadas were equated with terminal Classic and early Postclassic.

18. For Chiapas, the authors of the study did not include any sources for this period of time. It is not completely understandable why no data was mentioned for this period. For Clark participated in the publication in 1980 about Chiapas, where for the Terminal Classic (exact dates are missing) a sample based on 1,554 fragments was mentioned. In this great comparative analysis only the settlement Lagatero is mentioned and categorized for the Classic period. Lagatero served in the study of 1980 as an example for the following Late Classic Period.

19. Amazingly enough, the arch belonging to Uxmal, first described by Blom (1930) and later photographed and measured by Smith and Ruppert (1954), seems to be lost. This is a phenomenon that happens often, unfortunately, in American studies.

20. He notices this possibility of connection through the unpublished reports of the clergyman Tomás Torres, who traveled parts of this route during the sixteenth century (Navarrete 1978).

21 . . . demás de muchas ciénagas y ríos pequeños, que en todos hubo puentes, se pasaron tres muy grandes, que fue el uno en un pueblo que se dice Tumulán, que está nueve leguas de la villa del Espíritu Santo, y el otro es Aguascalco, que está otros nueve adelante, y éstos se pasaron en canoas . . . (Cortés 1963, 245).

22. de Landa (1982, 5) mentions this in his descriptions of the lagoons between Tabasco and Yucatan: "Que entra el mar por estas bocas con tanta furia que se hace una gran laguna abundante de todos pescados y tan llena de isletas, que los indios ponen señales en los árboles para acertar el camino para ir o venir navegando de Tabasco a Yucatán. . ."

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## **Part III**

### **Ritual centers**



## **Chapter 11**

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### **Temple Networks and Royal Power in Southeast Asia**

**Kenneth R. Hall**

The earliest Southeast Asian records, which are inscribed on stone or metal, use Sanskrit, Chinese, or a local language to formulate important social ideas. These records of a societal elite need to be approached not as propaganda or the assertions of egomaniacs, but as records purposely composed using keywords that were culturally meaningful. The early inscriptions especially address ancestral and spiritual issues that were foundational to the social and spiritual bonds of a community (Mabbett 1969). Kingship was heroic rather than institutional (Wolters 1999); kings were overlords rather than managers (Stein 1975, 77). Kings demanded submission to a claim of superiority rather than obedience to specific orders. They might exercise little direct administrative control, but embody immense ritual significance (Stein 1980, 275).

The tenth and eleventh centuries in Southeast Asian history were marked by substantive social change. Inscriptions certified local landholding rights relative to the creation or restoration of temples and the transfers of full or partial property rights and manpower to temples at various levels of society. These linked transfers financed religious ceremonies among developing Hindu and Buddhist ritual networks which were associated with more integrated polities. The heightened concern over land rights was a by-product of the greater agricultural output of that age and the resulting competition between states and local elites to control agricultural wealth and its producers. Temples were in various ways the intermediaries between centralizing polities and local traditions.

In the tenth century, central Java diminished in societal importance in favor of eastern Java, especially the Brantas and Solo River basins, as a new Javanese monarchy developed under the authority of Balitung (c. 907-c. 913). He and his successors held greater authority over their subordinate regions than had previously been the case, for surviving inscriptions document the certification of the Javanese monarchs' landholding and taxable rights during the extension of wet rice cultivation into newly opened irrigated fields in eastern Java. In a previous age, symbolic statements of royal authority and societal integration in central Java had been single Buddhist or Hindu ritual complexes (e.g., Borobudur or Prambanan). Symbolizing a new sense of empowerment, the ritual networks that monarchs encouraged in east Java focused less on a central royal temple, but instead culminated in a royal palace complex (*kraton*) which became the hub of ritualized exchanges between kings and their subordinate elites. In a second phase of this evolution, characteristic of the reign of Airlangga (1019-1049), Javanese monarchs endowed monastic hermitages rather than lavish royal temples. Religious institutions became local enterprises, subject to the approval of, and sometimes in partnership with, the royal court (Sedyawati 1994).

In Cambodia, Angkor emerged as the paramount and continuing center of the Khmer monarchy. Sanskrit and Khmer inscriptions from the ninth and tenth centuries record the foundation of numerous ancestral temples, with the legal consent or under the patronage of the Angkor monarch. In return for their certification, Khmer kings did not necessarily dictate that elites transfer local wealth to royal temples such as Angkor. Instead, it was sufficient, initially, that elites sought royal certification, as statements of local submission to the centralizing polity. Perhaps the most notable transitional era of royal initiatives to consolidate a court-focused ritual network took place under

Suryavarman I (1002-1050). During his reign, Khmer temples, old and new, royal and local, were richly endowed with deferred income rights to property.

### Java around the year 1000

The question central to the rise of Javanese monarchy in the tenth century is the shift of the center of its authority from central to eastern Java (See Figure 1). Why did this shift occur, and what were its implications relative to Javanese society and culture? Since there is a continuity of Java's rulers, this transition did not represent a change in dynasties, nor is there evidence of dynastic warfare, disease, or reaction to oppressive demands consequential to constructions of major temple complexes in central Java.<sup>1</sup> Competition between the royal authority of the "great king" (*maharaja*) and regional elites (*rakrayan*) may have also had a role, or perhaps a volcanic eruption made the lands of central Java temporarily useless (Boechari 1979). Simultaneously, the Sumatra-based maritime realm of Srivijaya was losing control over the trade routes in Southeast Asia. The move to east Java provided new opportunities relative to maritime trade routes, both oceanic and riverine, as well as access to virgin and highly productive lands in the Solo and Brantas River basins (Hall 1985; Wisseman-Christie 1998b). Certainly, the move from the central Java ecological zone to that of eastern Java afforded increased opportunities for the king relative to competing elites.

East Java-based kings constructed dams, canal systems, and dikes to control annual floods and thus enhance local productivity or their own access to local producers. Water management is, however, a less definitive factor in the assertions of royal power in east Java, in contrast to central Java where local population centers were the primary units of irrigation agriculture under the coordination of councils of elders. In central Java, local population centers that shared a common water source were already federated in regional units under regional chiefs. The regional units were self-contained irrigation and marketing territories, supporting social, economic, and political cohesion as well as autonomy vis-à-vis the centralizing ambitions of supreme chiefs (*ratu*), who took the Indic title *maharaja* and patronized the Indic religions they believed appropriate to their legitimacy (Van Setten van der Meer 1979; Wisseman-Christie 1994). The old concept of "Oriental Despotism" (Wittfogel 1957) does not fit the early Javanese case, because there were regular shifts of the royal center among



several regionally based clan networks and we see no evidence of an elaborate, court-based administrative bureaucracy. The only approximation of a unified Javanese state was realized in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, based more on the cultural leadership than the political innovations of the reigning Javanese monarchs (Hall 1996a, 2000).

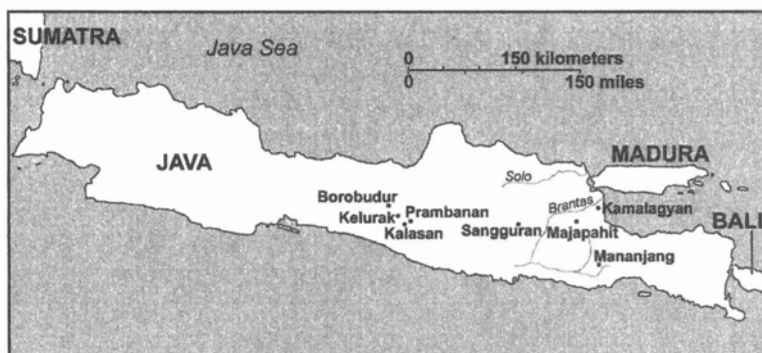


Figure 1. Sites in Java around the year 1000

Tenth-century inscriptions sometimes provide detailed descriptions of the processes that converted forest (*alas*) and dry fields (*tegal*) to wet rice (*sawah*) fields. Michael Dove (1985) demonstrates, however, that it was not necessarily profitable for Java's peasants to convert their production to wet rice cultivation, in terms of labor and energy expended in proportion to returns. From the peasantry's standpoint, wet rice systems likely led to submission to authority and less mobility than was the case among hunters and gatherers or shifting slash-and-burn cultivators (Hefner 1985), and thus may have increased the likelihood of an undesirable focal authority above the local population centers. In Dove's view, therefore, the concentration of population foundational to wet rice cultivation does not necessarily antedate the organization of the state, but a pre-existing polity might attempt to create the population clusters that allowed and maintained the state's economic base. Control over populations by Javanese monarchs or regional elites could have preceded the creation of a specific kind of agricultural development and wealth. Dove does not explain, however, how Java's rulers were able to create new population clusters, or to take advantage of existing clusters to expand wet rice cultivation, and thus their power.

Another puzzle in early Javanese history is why east Java between the ninth and thirteenth centuries did not develop large-scale hinterland centers of permanent trade. The population, wealth, and transport infrastructures were sufficient to have produced permanent urban centers beyond the coast. One explanation is that the Javanese economy functioned most efficiently when its population was clustered in small productive communities located within decentralized regions. Some scholars feel this localized character of wet rice agriculture represented an assertion of local autonomy against a would-be monarch; another explanation is that royal policy purposefully nourished this decentralization (Wisseman-Christie 1991; Kulke 1991).

I suggest that we may understand the expansion of wet rice cultivation regimes and the distinctive characteristics of habitation partly through an understanding of royal policies and local resistance, and partly through an analysis of exchanges officially coordinated by rulers for the benefit of religious beneficiaries. At the beginning of east Java's hegemony, inscriptions record royal initiatives that added to the state economic base through state-encouraged development of previously uncultivated peripheral lands, as well as by taxable trade. Between 900 and 1060, for example, more than forty new communities were established by direct royal intervention in the developing Brantas River delta.<sup>2</sup> This development resulted in undeniable economic growth, but these and other royal initiatives were undertaken, first and foremost, to promote the king's authority in relation to rival elite institutions. The extension of authority was impossible without the simultaneous elaboration of public ceremonies surrounding the bestowal of gifts.

### **Regional ecosystem relationships with the Javanese state**

To discern the internal evidence of early Javanese ecosystem development, one may plot socio-political and religious networks that have economic implications. Specifically, the figures that follow characterize the shifting interactions of east-Java based states and their local units of production from roughly 900-1100 as documented in that era's epigraphic records.<sup>3</sup>

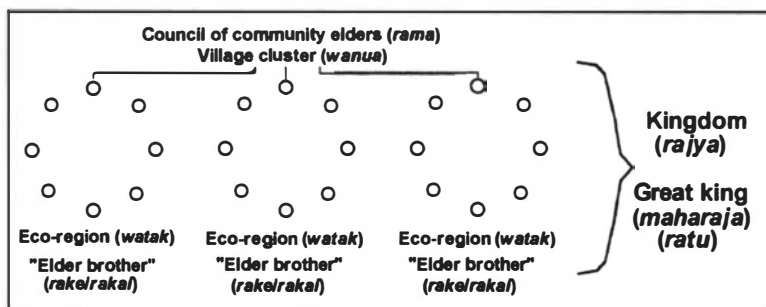


Figure 2. Early Java administration

Figure 2 depicts the early court-focused central Javanese sovereignty as described in inscriptions dated prior to 1000 (Jones 1984, 15-20). The early polity consisted of economic or ecological regions (*watak*) that came to assume a subordinate role under the authority of one leader (*rake/rakai/rakrayan*) who had gained the most prestige among his equals. He thus assumed the indigenous title of monarchical authority (*ratu*), and the prestigious Indic title of sovereignty (*maharaja*). The eco-regions (*watak*) were natural units of water management and spheres of personal authority rather than self-contained territorial or administrative units (Jones 1984, 59-90; Naerssen and de Jongh 1977, 36-81; Casparis 1981; Wisseman-Christie 1991). They were comprised of village clusters (*wanua*) that were governed by councils of community elders headed by local individuals of distinction (*rama*).<sup>4</sup> In this early age there were two growth processes at work. Agrarian community expansion occurred at the village cluster level, while trade and initial social differentiation characterized relationships with the inhabitants of other village clusters and eco-regions.

The councils of community elders and village cluster authorities began to appear in epigraphic references in the eighth century. By the late ninth century the initial political expansion of supra-local authority resulted in the incorporation of neighboring village clusters into *watak* under the jurisdiction of local lords or "elder brothers" (*rake/rakai/rakrayan*) through an interactive village-and-center relationship.<sup>5</sup> A lord's claim to sovereignty was based on his continuing ability to establish reciprocity and redistribution networks in which material and psychological well being were perceived as a result of submission to authority. Power then seemed to be handed down to the eco-region and the village cluster. The great king's realm consisted of possibly larger or more fertile lands linked to translocal trade, or it was

strategically located relative to regional water distribution. The rise of a *ratu* from a village cluster/eco-region base was both material and ceremonial. It involved an individual or group pooling resources that could be shared with or redistributed to others.<sup>6</sup>

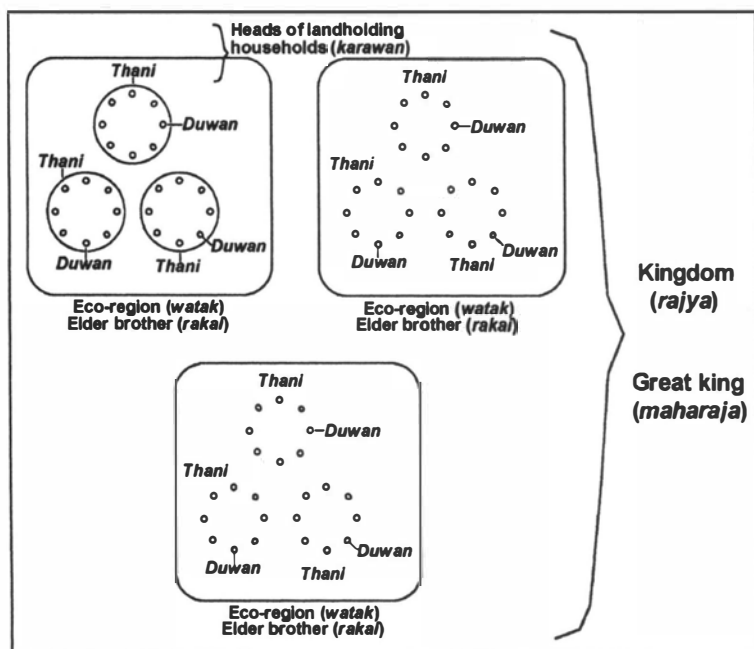


Figure 3. Java administration around the year 1000

Figure 3 represents changes in political concepts visible in the epigraphic corpus during the shift of Javanese sovereignty from central to eastern Java around the year 1000, roughly from the reign of Balitung to the transitional era culminating in the reign of Airlangga. Both rulers initiated a more internally and externally interactive Javanese polity (Jones 1984, 2-3; Naerssen 1977, 52-53; Wisseman-Christie 1982). The resulting economic development is reflected in the demographic expansion of village communities, and especially the rise of sub-communities of hamlets (*duwan*), a tendency toward local subdivision coincident with a downturn in the monarch's revenue collections.

By the late tenth century, epigraphic references to the local units of settlement use the word *thani* instead of *wanua*.<sup>7</sup> This new terminology in references to the village community appears to have been the result

of a royal command, and represents an attempt to disconnect tax collection from its initial physical setting in a cluster of villages. The "reorganization" seems to relate especially to the attempts by several monarchs to settle unused territory (Casparis 1986a: 17; Wisseman-Christie 1991, 1994). The royal intent was to detach uncultivated land from village clusters and to incorporate it into new *thani* communities, thereby creating settlements in which councils of community elders were less locally entrenched. In response, and to maintain their local authority, the councils of village elders asserted their rights "to all land and water that lay within *wanua* boundaries, whether cultivated or not . . . and the right to its disposal" against the claims of late-arriving "newcomers" and the ruler.<sup>8</sup> To proclaim their enhanced stature, the councils of village elders assumed the distinguished title of "founders" (*anak wanua thani*) (Brandes 1913, 112; Casparis 1986b, 62, n. 6). Only these founders could hold rights to wet rice land. In newly cleared land (*babad*), the founders established "daughter settlements" (*duwan*) or hamlets that became the primary unit for local identification. *Duwan* were the residencies of the founders who managed or led other hamlets (*thani*) in a village cluster (Sedyawati 1994, 198-200).

Admitting their inability to challenge local autonomy, but at the same time salvaging the idea of local submission to the "state as facilitator," eleventh-century monarchs began applying the terminology of the *thani*, inclusive of local *duwan*, as a replacement for the old village cluster identification. They bestowed the title "heads of landholding households" (*karawan*) on village elders, as an alternative to the self-styled "founders" title (Wisseman-Christie 1986, 77-79; 1991).

The state also incorporated non-cultivators, especially merchants, into the *thani-duwan* rural communities that were recognized as subject to the authority of the heads of landholding households. These new arrangements prevented the emergence of separate commercial enclaves in the hinterland. Merchants and artisans could congregate in designated urban centers and ports of trade that were subject to direct state authority, but not in the hinterland. Under new tax concession agreements, as long as the local hamlet production and the number of resident commercial and artisan professionals remained below a certain level, the community remained tax-free. Rather than grow too large, and thereby become subject to royal taxes, rural communities tried to remain small by sub-dividing and incorporating new hamlets. This was done whenever local production/population reached a level that would require tax remissions to the state. The process limited the number and activities of market specialists living in the community.<sup>9</sup>

It would seem that the state was resolved that if it could not control the local units directly, then it could at least keep them small, divided, and politically harmless. Local acceptance of this limit on the size of the community and the concept of "small is better" preserved local autonomy in regard to the state polity. New land came under cultivation and local productivity increased, but with caps on the size of the local production unit and its professional trade.

### **Tax transfers and ritualized feasts in Java**

During the tenth and eleventh centuries, transfers of "tax-free territory" (*sima*) were a principal part of the royal efforts to promote court authority. These were not gifts of land, for Javanese monarchs did not normally possess local land rights, and even their tax rights were subject to negotiation with village elders and regional authorities. When the state transferred a title to land, it had to purchase the land first from the villages affected. *Sima*, on the other hand, involved the alienation of all or a portion of the income rights due to a superior political authority from designated land. It was the common source of funding for ancestor temples that honored deceased monarchs, regional lords, or village ancestors. Land that became *sima*, providing prescribed income to a religious institution, a favored individual, or a group, fell outside the administrative authority of the king. *Sima* grants made on previously uncultivated, peripheral areas were a means of encouraging pioneer territorial expansion, and they were also a means by which farmers and non-farmers were brought into (and under) a dominant agrarian order (Kulke 1991).

In addition to *sima* tax transfers made by those claiming monarchical status, regional lords also issued *sima* charters, giving up their rights to tax and normally their local administrative rights at the same time. They did this with the approval of an overlord king, who coincidentally transferred royal tax rights over the land.<sup>10</sup> *Sima* rights were held forever, as shown by later thirteenth and fourteenth century epigraphic records of court cases upholding grants made by defunct ruling families (Casparis 1981, 128-30; Wisseman-Christie 1986, 72). *Sima* grants freed designated lands from numerous demands for taxes and services, prohibiting tax collectors and officials working for local rulers or village authorities from entering domains to collect payments on their own or others' behalf (Sedyawati 1994, 224-30; Jones 1984, 59-81). Thus, while on the surface these "tax transfers" would imply the local surrender of royal power, they eliminated in addition a portion of the

wealth directly available to a local elite. Local notables were, however, compensated for their lost income with “presents” of gold, silver, or cloth. In practice, *sima* transfers established a stable institutional foothold that rulers based in eastern Java could use to extend their political and economic influence beyond the shifting centers of royal power. There was frequently a limit, however, on the amount of tax the overlord polity was willing to forgo.

Let us look at an example. In an inscription dated 905, King Balitung granted special trading concessions and *sima* status to benefit two lords (*rakrayan*) in connection with the construction of an aqueduct, and as a reward or boon (*anugraha*) because of their success in a royal military expedition against Bali.<sup>11</sup> The *sima* initiative came from priests who were acting in collaboration with villagers. Elders from the village and other individuals involved in the construction of the aqueduct, as well as various witnesses, each received gifts to recognize their participation in the *sima* initiation ritual (Jones 1984, Appendix 3, 166-77). This inscription provides no evidence of royal coercion; all participants, lords, officials, priests, and villagers benefited. The two lords who were the recipients (i.e. supervisors) of the grant were made heads of the residences in the assigned territory, “to look after the offerings of each Julung.” That is, the lords annually would make sure that the resident producers made good on their contracted payments to a temple.

Another early tenth century example contrasts with Balitung’s previously cited inscription, in that two high priests rather than secular lords were the designated *sima* administrators. This inscription also documents the remarkable occupational specialization that was already a feature of Javanese society. The following record stresses King Balitung’s desire to protect merchants and other travelers from bandits and other dangers. The goal was not to extend wet rice cultivation for its own sake, but to provide for the more efficient movement of traders,<sup>12</sup> and, by implication, the flow of commodities along stable communication channels:

On this date the favour of Sri Maharaja Rake Watukura Dyah Balitung . . . went down to the Rakryan Mapatih I Hino Pu Daksantama Bahubajrapratipaksaksaya and then to the Rakryan Bawang Dyah Srahwana. The reason for the grant was that the grounds in Kaladi, Gayam and Pyapya coming under the administration of Bawang were respectfully offered to Dampunta [“High Priest”] Suddara and Dampunta Dampi as *sima* to be planted with flowers to provide an obligatory contribution. The *sima* was given to them, the reason being that the grounds in Gayam and Pyapya situated between Guanta and Kamula were

uncultivated grounds, said to be fearsome, infested with *mariwung*, which endangered the traders and people from downstream by day and by night. And so there was an agreement for the use of the uncultivated ground, for it to become a *sawah*, to stop being a fearsome place and to stop being under the administration of Bawang, to be a free place, not to be interfered with by *patih*, *wahuta*, or any kind of *mangilala drwya haji*, *misra para misra*, inferior persons of all kinds, *pangurang*, *kring*, *manami*, joiners, foreigners, goldsmiths, *pangaruhan*, spur makers, *watu tajem*, *sukun*, officials in charge of processions and orchestras, poets, musicians, rice cooks, *tapa haji*, *air haji*, inspectors of gambling, *leca*, vegetable cooks, *kalangkang*, breadfruit cooks, *tangkil*, *trpan*, *salwit*, overseers of traders, *juru salit*, *mangrumbai*, preparers of cannabis (?), *tuha nambi*, *tununjaman*, *watu walang*, jewellers, *maniga*, guards, sellers of drugs and spices, village census takers, *wiji kawah*, *tingkes*, *hawe*, overseers of gamblers, overseers of prostitutes, *misra hino*, buyers of lime, buyers of axes, buyers of rope, buyers of wood and coal, mat makers, *pakalungkung*, *urutan*, *dampulan*, *tpung kawung*, *sungsang*, *pangurang*, forest inhabitants, *umbrella makers*, *pulung padi*, *pabesar*, cart drivers, *panginangin*, *sipat wilut*, *pamawasya*, *hopan*, *panrangang*, *skar tahun*, gathers of water snails, collectors of *turun turun* tax, *pamalihan*, medicine men, singers, *sambal*, royal slaves, corpse washers, *watek i jero*. All these may not enter the freehold of Gayam and Pyapya. And the disposal of the king's dues, and the advantages and disadvantages: namely, the areca flower which does not bloom, the gourd which creeps along the ground, the corpse which met an untimely death, covered in dew, blood flowing on the ground, talking flippantly, saliva spattered . . . (Jones 1984, Appendix 4, 180-83).

The ceremony that formalized a *sima* tax transfer, whether that of a king or another lesser authority, emphasized that the one who gave up rights was expected to remain loyal to the state. Usually great public festivals and ceremonies were held in honor of new transfers and foundations; they must have served as a means of redistributing wealth that might otherwise have been used in ways disruptive to society (and to the king). That *sima* investitures had great local meaning is shown by the broad community participation in the chartering rituals. The Sangguran inscription of 928 specified that:

Everyone attended, according to their rank, all the *patih*, the *wahutas*, *ramas*, *kabayan*, and the *rama tpi sering*, the representatives of the neighboring villages; the aged and the young, men and women, from all classes without exception, all attended and partook of the ceremonial food (Sarkar 1971-72, 2: 234).



With prominent local witnesses and ranking officials present to demonstrate their approval and support for the grant, the foundation ceremonies were preceded by gift giving to those officially taking part. In instances of royal involvement, the gifts were termed “customary ample measure” (*pasek-pasek/pasak-pasak*). Individuals with the most prominent positions were presented with gifts first, which included the objects of the greatest value. Gold, silver, and cloth are the most commonly referenced *pasek-pasek* gifts. Taking a gift was as important as the gift itself, and symbolically compensated for any loss of revenue.<sup>13</sup> Next came the ceremony of land investiture. This portion of the ritual addressed the transfer of tax obligations from specific corporate entities, such as the king, to a religious institution. This involved the calling of witnesses, especially those who were directly affected, who were there to certify the validity of the transaction. Following this business there was ceremonial feasting.

The ritual feast is frequently described in infinite detail. The Taji copper plate inscription of 901 lists the various dishes offered for the meal, including the precise number of *lontar* leaves distributed to each group of people, upon which they could place their food.<sup>14</sup> First the food was offered to the appropriate “participating” deities, and then all the ceremonial participants ate, including the members of the local community regardless of their social stature. Entertainment followed. Dancing, gambling, cock-fights, drama performances by masked players, music and singing, shadow puppet (*wayang*) performances, and recitals of the *Ramayana* were the high point of the ritual feasting. These activities were seen as performances for the pleasure of the deities, and the blood of cock-fights was a symbolic sacrifice, perhaps to guard against evil spirits trying to interfere with the consecration ritual that followed the entertainment (Van Setten van der Meer 1979, 122, 126-30).

The final portion of the investiture ceremony consisted of the reciting of a solemn consecration formula. In the early inscriptions this involved an oath in which the recipient pledged fidelity. This portion of the ritual dealt with a linked transfer, specifying what the income from the freehold would finance – the construction of and/or maintenance of a temple, the placement of an icon, the periodic performance of ritual, or the support of noted holy men. A stone inscription or copper plate charter was often the focal point of this consecration. For example:

[All the participants] sat on the ground in a circle, with their faces turned to the officiating priest and the "sacred foundation stone," which was placed under the canopy in the middle (Sarkar 1971-1972, 2: 28).

When all were seated the officiating priest uttered the oath formula, cut off the head of a hen, which was crushed on the sacred foundation stone, and (then) threw eggs on the *watu sima* and uttered oaths (Sarkar 1971-1972, 2: 95).

In one instance, the inscribed stone itself was symbolically presented with four sets of ceremonial cloth and four weights of gold (Sarkar 1971-1972, 2: 4-8).

The ending of the investiture ritual included a common plea that the grant should be maintained as originally intended. *Sima* charters from the late eighth century are the last to invoke future kings "by these words on the stone that will last forever, to protect the domains and the institutions [established herein] for posterity."<sup>15</sup> Thereafter, focus shifted from future kings' unauthorized incursions into the locality to the potential immorality and illegal actions of locals. Typically in these later inscriptions there was a curse uttered by a villager or by a religious official that threatened those present who would transgress against the freehold and thus demonstrate disloyalty to the monarch. An elaborate example from the eleventh century was designed to strike terror in the hearts of transgressors:

Who disturbs the village . . . he may be brought to destruction . . . he may be killed by all the gods in such a way that he may not (find time to) turn behind, he may not (find time to) look behind; he may be pushed in the front-side; struck on the left-side, his mouth may be struck, his forehead may be battered, his belly may be ripped open, his intestines may be rooted out, his entrails may be drawn out, his heart may be plucked out, his flesh may be eaten, his blood may be drunk up, then he may be trampled upon, lastly he may be killed! (Sarkar 1971-1972, 2: 241).

*Sima* "freeholds" came about at the same time as the introduction of copper plate charters<sup>16</sup> that served as tangible evidence of the royal spoken word, considered the very breath of magical and spiritual power. The inscribed charters were treated with awe and reverence, not only as sacred relics, but also as a royal and thus divine validation of an established system of rights and obligations. Holding a charter, tangible proof of the divine, authorized the community to exercise the entitlements thereby enumerated. A commonly held belief was that the

duties and prohibitions operational in a community had been imposed by divine sanction in the distant past.<sup>17</sup>

While these new copper-plate inscriptions validate kingship, the high number of curses associated with ninth- and tenth-century *sima* charters supports the conclusion that the Javanese monarchy was still weak. By the eleventh century, however, the omission of dreadful curses and the elaboration of the fiscal terms entailed by the *sima* obligations denotes a monarchy that had less need to intimidate and was much more self-assured.<sup>18</sup>

The reign of Airlangga featured large-scale public works projects that were directly initiated by the monarch, alongside assertions of the elaborate reciprocities expected from those residing in the affected hinterlands. The following selection from an inscription demonstrates the greater confidence of the monarchy in the eleventh century:

This dam was built in order to bring about benefits for the world and the revival of all of the holy religious foundations . . . This was brought about through the command of His Majesty [Airlangga], who has his capital at Kahuripa, because he visibly showers upon the world the elixir of life that is his affection, causing a rain of merit. By this construction he will serve to perfect all of the holy temple (*dharma*) foundations for the benefit of all his subjects, old and young, who dwell in the sanctified realm (*mandala*) of the island of Java. His reason for causing the source of devotion to spread is to provide a shining example for all of the world, and also to add to the splendor (of the realm). This is his reason for conducting himself as a universal monarch (*chakravartin*) as he has in undertaking this construction which will bring about daily well-being for the world, thus providing a sign to the world that His Majesty is not interested solely in his own advantage.

This outpouring of religious fervor is followed by very specific reference in monetary terms (coinage, produce, and cloth) to the taxes due to the king from each of the communities that were to benefit from the development project.<sup>19</sup>

### Transitions in the Khmer monarchy during the reign of Suryavarman I

A Khmer temple network was equally foundational to the Cambodian monarch's control over ritual, and the elaborate royal cults centered in temples were a significant means of subordinating regional competitors to royal authority (Mabbett 1977; Kulke 1986; Mabbett

and Chandler 1995, 78-93, 100-06, 164-69, 171-74). The Khmer kings' powers were generated by ritual. The court, its activities, and its style recreated a world of the gods, in which all greatness and glory were concentrated. Subordinate centers of power sought to imitate the ritual of the royal court (Mabbett 1978). Ritual unity was more important than administrative control in maintaining dominance outside a core zone (See Figure 4).

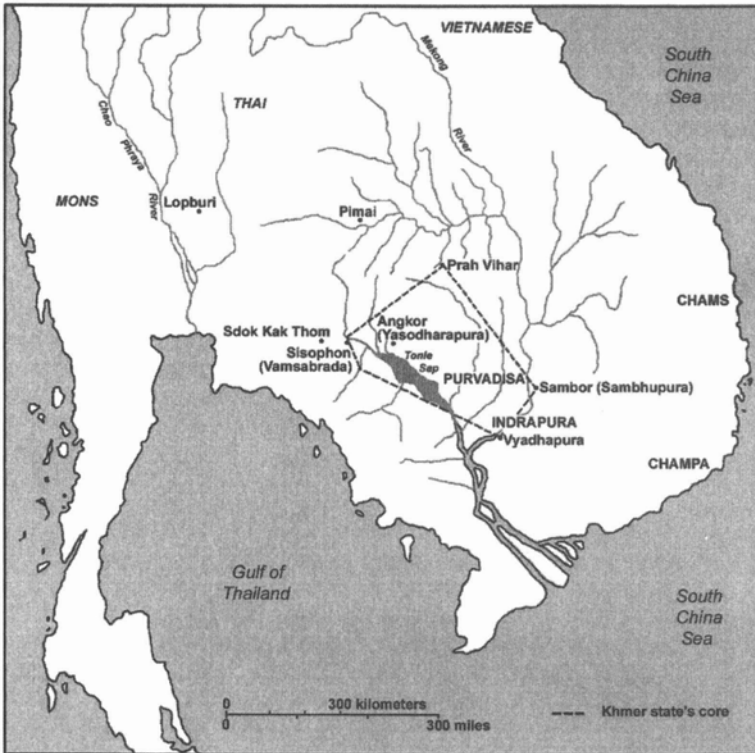


Figure 4. Kambujadesa in the time of Suryavarman I, around 1000

Territorial unification by conquest was not sufficient to sustain the realm. Instead this came about through the integration of indigenous folk traditions, symbols, and religious beliefs into a cult that was visibly concentrated in the center. The most notable of these was the "god king" or *devaraja* cult (Kulke 1978; Mabbett 1969; Jacques 1985). Participation in the overlord polity's rituals by those who worshiped local spirits emphasized the subordination of local deities,

ancestral spirits, and their temples to those of the monarch, thus enhancing the king's image as the holder of supreme spiritual power and divine prowess among the living. There were thus political implications to the maintenance of a centralized Khmer temple network.

The reign of Suryavarman I (reigned 1002-1050), which marked a significant transition in the nature of Cambodian kingship, began after he fought his way to the throne against others with better credentials. As stated in the inscriptions:

His valor may be inferred from the fact that this wise Muni won the Kingdom in battle from a King surrounded by other kings (Finot 1904; Briggs 1951, 149).

Enflamed by [the gods], Sri Suryavarman, whose sword broke the circle of his enemies, obtained, for the prosperity of the earth, the desired royalty (Coedès 1911; Briggs 1951, 149).

Once in power, Suryavarman waged periodic war with his neighbors (e.g., against his Cham neighbors to the south), stabilized his external boundaries, and extended his resource base (Hall 1975, Hall 1979). He initiated territorial expansion into what is now Thailand in the west and the north and commissioned a number of diplomatic initiatives to solicit foreign trade that enhanced his realm's commercial economy (Du Bourg 1970; Hall 1975; Mabbett and Chandler 1995, 180-82). Most of his new state-temple construction initiatives were on the edges of his realm; these strategically placed monuments a means of integrating regional populations into the royal domain (Briggs 1951, 144-68). He revised the hereditary rights of the Khmer priesthood and landed elite, forcing the aristocratic families who administered royal cults and who had sided with his rivals to relinquish their prior hereditary rights and to accept buy-outs or revisions in the terms of their service (Du Bourg 1970; Sahai 1970; Vickery 1985). As an act of conciliation, he sustained the reconstruction of family temples that had been desecrated in the war of succession. At Angkor, Suryavarman redesigned the royal city by expanding and refocusing the old city of Yasodharapura, which had been centered on the Phnom Bakheng hill temple, on his royal residence, its adjacent royal temple, and public spaces. Suryavarman is believed to have initiated the construction of Angkor's West Baray (reservoir), which was significantly larger than the East Baray that was over a century old, and thus secured a stable water supply for Angkor's agriculture and/or ritual needs.<sup>20</sup>

Suryavarman's reign is marked by substantial population growth, generalized prosperity, and increased urbanization. There were at least 47 "cities" (*pura*) in his realm, 20 of which appear for the first time in Khmer inscriptions (Du Bourg 1970, 308).

Suryavarman's reign made it clear that royal favor was necessary for the ambitions of elite families (Coedès 1937-66, 7: 164-89). They had to be willing to subordinate their own interests to those of the king, and were subsequently incorporated into the royal bureaucratic order. As a result, at least 16 major inscriptions recording the histories of bureaucratic families were issued between 1002 and 1080 (i.e., from the reign of Suryavarman to the death of Harshavarman III).

Like Java's monarchs, Suryavarman encouraged the development of new lands in order to increase production that could be shared between aristocratic officials and the state (Vickery 1985, 232ff). He sent royal inspectors to the sites of land transfers to validate transactions and to determine if the land for development was free of any competing claims from aristocratic families. Indeed, in some cases villagers were already occupying lands, and the king reassigned the rights to their production and labor to the families receiving his favor. Notably, the villagers came under the administration (*cat camnat*) of the families' temples.

Early Khmer monarchs could only recognize the possession of land rights, rather than having wide powers of land assignment. In tenth-century Cambodian inscriptions, on the other hand, although the extent of the king's authority over temples and their domains is unclear, the king became more actively involved when the resources of two or more temples were merged. The religious network forged by Angkor's kings insured that the landholding rights of Khmer elites would remain fragmented; only those in royal favor could consolidate or extend their property rights. The state forbade "mixed enjoyment" (*misrabhoga*), or the joining of the rights to lands of more than one local estate's temple, without the approval of the king himself (Ricklefs 1967, 415). Such "mixed" consolidation, initiated by powerful regional families, had been common in pre-Angkor society as a means by which a regional elite established its power base. From the late tenth century, consolidation was closely supervised in order to limit the growth of the elite's resources. Transfers of land rights to temples without the king's involvement still took place, but Angkor-era monarchs received requests to sanction the transactions as a matter of course. The Khmer monarchs became the spiritual overlords of private property rights, acting as judges in disputes, but in most instances only interfering after solicitation of royal or bureaucratic participation.

The apparent key to the Khmer monarch's control over manpower was his ability to form overlord alliances with local leaders. The king, acting from his center of authority at Angkor, fragmented the power of enemies by formulating agreements in which prospective opponents became subordinates of the state. After conquering a territory with his armies, Suryavarman was particularly adept at incorporating the leaderships on the outer edges of his personal domain as district chiefs (*khlon visaya*) with little change in their status.<sup>21</sup>

It was during Suryavarman's reign in 1011 that four hundred members of the king's administrative corps (*tamrvac*) pledged an oath of allegiance, swearing to become the local "eyes" of the king and pledging to feed the capital with information about local activities:

In 933c [1011] . . . August-September . . . This is the oath which we, belonging to the body of *tamrvac* of the first (second, third, or fourth) category, swear, all, without exception, cutting our hands, offering our lives and our devotion gratefully, without fault, to His Majesty Sri Suryavarmadeva, who has been in complete enjoyment of sovereignty since 924c [1002], in the presence of the sacred fire, of the holy jewel, the brahmans and the *acaryas*. We will not revere another king, we shall never be hostile (to our king), and will not be accomplices of any enemy, we will not try to harm him in any way. All actions which are the fruit of our thankful devotion to His Majesty Sri Suryavarmadeva, we pledge ourselves to perform them. If there is war, we promise to fight and to risk life, with all our soul, in devotion towards our King. If there is no war and we die by suicide or sudden death, may we obtain the recompense of people devoted to their masters. If our existence remains at the service of His Majesty up to our death, we will perform our task with devotion to the King, whatever may be the time and circumstances of our death. If His Majesty orders us to go far away, to obtain information on any matter, we will try to learn the thing in detail and each of us to keep this promise in whatever concerns us. If all of us who are here in person do not keep this oath with regard to His Majesty, may He still reign long, we ask that He inflict on us royal punishment of all sorts. If we hide ourselves in order not to keep this oath strictly, may we be reborn in the thirty-second hell as long as the sun and the moon shall last. If we fulfil this promise without fault, may His Majesty give orders for the maintenance of the pious foundations of our country and for the sustenance of our families, because we are devoted to our master, His Majesty, Suryavarmadeva, who has enjoyed complete sovereignty since 924 saka (1002); and may we obtain the recompense of people devoted to our masters, in this and the other world (Coedès 1913; Briggs 1985, 151).

These retainers who pledged their loyalty to Suryavarman were most active in the districts of newly appointed *khlon visaya*, and were likely

intended to serve as a reminder of the king's authority in these regions and as a source of intelligence regarding their loyalty. However, in later inscriptions, tamrvac are specifically listed as being among those royal officials whose rights in a temple domain were voided. This suggests either a royal response to local pressure to remove royal officials, or it may also suggest that they became too closely allied to the local khlon visaya. The elimination of the tamrvac's local authority (which in such instances could have been utilized to reinforce the local elite's authority at royal expense) would thus have had a negative impact on the power of the khlon visaya.

Early historiography on the Khmer realm idealized the state as a social pyramid with the king and his elite sitting on top and little contact between them and the people below (Heine-Geldern 1942). In Suryavarman's realm, however, there was more interaction between the king's representatives and the local populations. The Khmer polity protected regional interests by incorporating the local concept of status quo (i.e., the local peasantry reporting to the local aristocracy) into its formal structure instead of replacing the local landed families with officials sent out from the capital. It further benefited local communities by making its army available to stand guard, maintaining order in the regions under state control and protecting the domain from invasions. Unlike pre-Angkor inscriptions, which denote a limited presence of court officials at the local level, Suryavarman's inscriptions indicate the physical presence of royal officials to administer the transfer of land and to directly collect revenues due to the king, as well as local visits made by the royal retinue (*kamsten*). This was a mobile body of state administrators who traveled from place to place within the realm, settling disputes that could not be solved locally or sitting in judgment on affairs that were considered to be within the state's sphere of interest (Coedès 1937-66, 3: 57-64; 4:140-50; 6: 225-27). The royal retinue was thus a periodic, visible symbol of the king's administration, while the tamrvac represented royal interest locally in the king's absence.

Suryavarman's reign represents a critical phase in the development of an integrated Khmer polity, with the temple network assuming a major role in the development process. Notably, the oath of commitment made by the members of Suryavarman's tamrvac concludes with their stipulation that in return for their loyal services, the king would maintain "the pious foundations [temples] of our country." Their second wish, which was made possible by the fulfillment of the first, was that Suryavarman "sustain our families." The prosperity of families in the Khmer realm – a prosperity based on control over the



production of land and manpower – came to depend more and more on royal favor, as well as the economic and ritual services of royal or family temples.

Although the number of royal inscriptions relative to those of his subordinates increased during Suryavarman's reign, temple construction inaugurated by families subordinate to the king (often with royal encouragement) greatly outnumbered that of the Khmer monarch. This does not demonstrate any weakness at the center, but instead came about through the intensified integration of the regional aristocracy into the Khmer polity. As noted, they were given official bureaucratic titles, their authority over land and manpower was recognized, and they were charged with responsibility for the expansion of the Khmer polity's economic and ritual base. Along with this recognition, however, went the responsibility of sharing their land's production with the state. Land transferred to aristocratic families was assigned specifically for the benefit of family temples, whose staffs assumed responsibility for supervising their development, but because they were subordinate to royal temples, these family temples had to share local production with the central temples and thus with the Khmer kings.

Exercising his theoretical land rights, Suryavarman dealt directly with aristocratic lineages constantly opposed to his interests by dictating that henceforth their lands were to be controlled by the Khmer king's administrators, and lineage resources were to merge with those of the king's temples (Coedès 1937-66, 6: 254-72). However, this was not a total seizure of family lands, as aristocratic rights were not reassigned to other families. In the Sdok Kak Thom inscription dating 1052, one of the foremost families of royal officials with hereditary responsibility for the cult of the "god king" claimed rights over land that was administered by their family temple. Rights over the temple's land had been granted by a series of kings; new settlements (*sruk*), provisions, and manpower had been endowed to equip the temple and to guarantee the growth of the community around it. In the turmoil associated with Suryavarman's rise to the throne, most of the priest/administrative/landholding family had sided against Suryavarman. The temple's livelihood as well as the family's prosperity were said to have been devastated in the war of succession from which Suryavarman emerged victorious. After gaining authority over areas where the family held land, the victorious king did not reassign all this family's land rights to his direct supporters, but instead he waited for the family's patriarch to die. Then he forced the new family head to abdicate his leadership of the devaraja cult and to marry a younger sister of the queen, thus tying that family's interests to his own. Some

of the family's original land rights were reassigned. The family was provided with new rights over land in an area beyond the royal core where it would seemingly be less a threat to royal interests, but where their presence as his agents would also help consolidate the royal hold over regions on the polity's periphery. Udayadityavaram II (1050-1066), Suryavarman's successor, renewed the endowment, allowing the now reconstituted family of officials to clear land overgrown by forest, consecrate temple icons, and rebuild their well-being:

In the *desa* of Bhadrayogi and others, situated in Indrapura [an administrative district on the Angkor realm's eastern border] and elsewhere, he [Jayendrapandita] executed as fruitful work of piety to the gods fixed there, ponds and other works and he installed there, in a manner conformable to the rites of Sarva-linga and two others. At Bhadrappattana, he erected, according to the rite, a *linga* and two statues and built a *valabhi* [a summit house containing the icons of Brahma and Harihara] provided with a wall of limonite. Having given to these three gods all the necessary goods, serfs, etc., he made a dike and a basin for the prosperity of the region. At Bhadravasa he constituted and gave to Sarasvati a great fortune, and this man with practical spirit made a basin, a park, and a dike. He consecrated to the god of Bhadradi an *asrama* increased by his care. He filled the stable with cows and made a dike. At Vamsabrada [Sisophon] he gave to the god all the riches accrued by him. He made a basin, a dike and a basin for the prosperity (of the country) . . .

In the district of Purvadisa [to the east of Angkor], in the country of origin (of the family), at Kuti, he restored the devastated villages and rebuilt all the enclosures. He erected a *linga* of a coudee (cubit), raised a *prasada*, gave some [bondsmen], gave all the goods. As to the land of Vahuyudha, village of Ve Dnop [in Purvadisa district], which had been completely devastated, he asked His Majesty Nirvanapada [posthumous name of Suryavarman] for it and planted there some boundaries and gave it to the temple of Kuti [Kutisvara] and to the members of his family (Coedès and Dupont 1943; Briggs 1985, 151, 163).

These lands, which had been devastated in Suryavarman's rise to power, were initially restored by Sivacarya (d. 1008), and Jayendrapandita continued this work. Suryavarman granted this land to his family, and Udayadityavaram II, his successor, confirmed this in the 1052 inscription:

Then the *dhuli jen vrah kamraten an* [i.e., Jayendrapandita; this is the highest honorific title ever bestowed on a brahmana up to that time] wished to make a foundation. His Majesty gave a *linga* of two *coudees*, with the ensemble of goods constituting the cultural materials of this

sanctuary and the ensemble of goods constituting the offerings, charged a dignitary to go and establish another *sruk* named Bhadraniketana, in the land of Bhadrapatana [in Indrapura district], belonging to the *dhuli jen vrah kamraten an* [Jayendrapandita], to erect there the *linga* of two *coudees* . . . to give 400 male and female [bondsmen] to this god, to build a stone tower, a *valabhi* to dig a ditch, to construct a causeway, to make fields and gardens. . . .

In 1052, the *dhuli jen vrah kamraten an* founded the *kamraten jagat* Sivalinga at Bhadraniketana. He informed His Majesty Udayadityavarman of it, soliciting that this establishment and these [bondsmen] . . . should still constitute a gracious liberality in favor of the *kamraten jagat* Sivalinga of Bhadraniketana, conferring on him the exclusive right to this establishment and this land - - as His Majesty Hirvanapada had done (to Sadisiva) by request . . . The *dhuli jen vrah kamraten an* assigned these slaves and this establishment for the service of the *kamraten jagat* Sivalinga of Bhadraniketana . . .

This magnanimous king, in favor of this (*guru*) who wished to make a foundation on this land, installed in the place called Bhadraniketana this *linga* (honored with) great offerings. Without talking of this (land) names Bhadraniketana . . . (the king) in making to this *linga* a donation of gold, of precious stones, of elephants, of horses, etc., expressed this vow for it: "May this Sarva Jayendrapamesvara [*linga*] project all around it, to dissipate the fogs, its powerful eclat, of a constant splendor, with honor and success, up to the extinction of being" . . . King Udayaditya has given by devotion to Sambhu Jayavarmesvara, in having fixed the measure and placing the boundaries on all sides (Coedès and Dupont 1943; Briggs 1985, 150).

Two lingas were placed, one by Jayendrapandita, and the personal *linga* in honor of Jayendrapandita by the king. Also established here at this time were icons of the ancestors (founders of the cult of the *devaraja*) – a Brahma in the image of Hiranyadama ("Hiranyaduma came like a compassionate Brahma") and a Harihara in the joint image of Sivakaivalya and Sivasrama [Sivasoma]. All of this seems to have been a buyout of the Sivakaivalya family, whose worship of and exclusive right of guardianship of the *devaraja* cult was taken away by Suryavarman.

Suryavarman's successor, Udayadityavarman, drawing on the successes of his predecessor, initiated his reign with the following proclamation of his legitimacy:

Seeing that, in the middle of Jambudvīpa [the cosmos], the dwelling of the gods, arises the mountain of gold [Hemadri-Meru], he (Udayaditya-

varman) made, as by emulation, a mountain of gold [Svarnadri] in the center of the city. On the crest of this mountain of gold, in a temple of gold, shining with a celestial brilliance, he erected a *linga* of Siva, honored with ablutions at the prescribed times. By this king, the sage Sangkarapandita, versed in all the sciences, was employed as *guru*, in view of the perfect efficacy of his sacrifices. On (this) mountain, the ornament of the three worlds, in the fortunate half of the month, this illustrious sage was instituted priest of (this) *linga* of gold by this protector of the earth . . . (Barth 1885; Briggs 1985, 171).

This, the Baphuon, was the most important building of that time, adjacent the Royal Enclosure and the Grand Plaza constructed by his predecessor Suryavarman.

## Conclusion

As one approaches the early history of Southeast Asia, it is necessary to understand the development of pre-modern societies free from a Western analytical bias. This is especially true relative to the issue of state formation. Is a state a territorially bound space with a minimum population, a productive system that generates a reasonable, regular, and stable surplus, and a shared ideology that legitimates political and social behavior (Claessen 1995)? Modern Western theories assert the primacy of a civilization achieving certain economic and political standards of structure and function in the definition of the "state." Such an approach is less meaningful when one addresses pre-modern Southeast Asian civilization, where cultural concerns often took precedence over political and economic rationality (Kulke 1986; Wolters 1999).

An individual's status and power derive from prestige appropriate to the values of a society, which may not be based on an individual's economic or political success, but on that person's contributions to the society's wellness, as broadly defined. Accomplishments are judged by fulfillment of religious or social obligations. A state's leadership takes form by becoming meaningful in the lives of local populations and impressive enough in its representations to make local authorities mindful of its presence (Reynolds 1995, 429). Studies of the origin of states in early Southeast Asia thus concern themselves with a birth and awakening of a community, where locals begin to see themselves as part of an order beyond the locality.<sup>22</sup> One does not search for an Oriental despot (Sedov 1978), but the development of kingship based

in a monarch's role as the focal member of a society rather than his dominance (administrative, economic, or military) over it.

This study has not been concerned with the external trading stimuli that contributed to local evolutions (Hall 1985; Wisseman-Christie 1998a, 1998b). Instead, it has addressed the societal reorganizations that are documented in local epigraphic records. This ordered society moved beyond the old village-based reciprocity networks. Individuals and families became members of a court-centered order. Local associations were still acknowledged, but were increasingly superceded by judgments emanating from royal courts or the actions of those empowered by courts (Hoadley 1971). Symbolic gifting remained a vital activity in the process of societal definition, but its consequence was now highly material (Hall 1996b). Royal inscriptions, in contrast to local epigraphic fragments, no longer emphasized the abstract potential for immortality that resulted from local loyalties to the court, as had been the case in the initial inscriptions. Instead they addressed the affairs of this world that were the consequence of orderly and interventionist court leadership, which was in partnership with families who held titles of distinction. Individual expressions of self and family were becoming less based in the local community (Day 1996). Now they were members of a larger societal entity that included those who identified with a common ethnicity and its heritage, and who viewed themselves as sharing residency in the lands of Java or Angkor Cambodia.

## Notes

1. Mundardjito, Professor of Archeology at the University of Indonesia, personal communication. See also this author's article entitled "Patterns of Temple Distribution in Early Classical Java," part of the online compendium *Indonesian Heritage* (<http://www.Indonesianheritage.com>): link through ancient history – early classic period – early classic history – life in early classic Indonesia.

2. There were undoubtedly more for which no epigraphic records remain. See Wisseman-Christie 1982, appendices, for Airlangga's Kamalagyan Inscription of 1037 (496-500); the Watukura Inscription – a tenth-century inscription of Balitung (527); the eleventh-century Kambang Putih Inscription that is contemporary to Airlangga (528-29); and the tenth-century Madhawa-pura Inscription (530-31).

3. In this account I have substantially revised my earlier view of the indigenous Javanese socio-political system (Hall 1985, 114-20). My previous portrayal of these rural communities and regional identities stressed the power

of the centralizing state against the withdrawing and vulnerable countryside, and inadequately captured the dynamic character of the local village clusters. I am now convinced that the Javanese eco-regions were in a periodic state of flux that was partially the result of an expansive political economy, but was also a byproduct of subsequent competition between centralizing states and semi-autonomous agrarian communities.

4. Damais (1970, 378-86) lists names preceded by the honorifics *si*, *sang*, and *pu*. "All the *rama* of Mamali" (*rama i mamali makabaihan*) reads a ninth-century inscription (Sedyawati 1994, 195, n. 1). See also Jones (1984, 108-09), wherein several cited inscriptions divided *rama* into "*rama* with a specific function" (*rama mangagam kon*) and "retired *rama*" (*rama marata*).

5. Poh Inscription of 905 (Stutterheim 1940, 4-5; Sarkar 1971-72, 2: 51-52). Normally several neighboring villages belong to a *watak* (in this instance three out of ten named villages are designated as *watak* members). The two most frequently mentioned *watak*, Hino and Halu, are associated with villages found spread across central and eastern Java (Boechari 1967-68). See Jones's discussion (1984, 98-100) of the Hino and Halu designations. She notes: "Buchari . . . argues that the Hino was a crown prince or princess, the designated successor to the reigning king. He bases his conclusions on the fact that the Hino seems generally to be the functionary next in importance to the king, so that therefore he must have been the crown prince as this would have been the next most important functionary in the kingdom. However, I see no evidence to support this view in the inscriptions up to and including Sindok's – if the Hino were in fact the crown prince then he achieved his inheritance only rarely in Old Javanese history, indeed on only two occasions up to 950. What is striking . . . is the variety of Rake titles held by kings" (Jones 1984, 99).

6. The *ratu*'s center for these redistribution networks was his *kraton* (*kadatuan*) (Casparis 1956, 233, 251).

7. The Wangli inscription dated 1120 (Brandes 1913, lxix) names eleven *rama* in a community that contained several hamlets. See also the Kamalagyan Inscription of Airlangga (1037) and the contemporary Mananjang (Malang) Inscription as translated by Wisseman-Christie (1982, 496-509).

8. See Casparis 1986a, 8-9. See Airlangga's Kamalagyan Inscription (1037) in Wisseman-Christie 1982, 496.

9. See, for example, the Dhimanasrama Inscription (a thirteenth-century copy of a tenth-century inscription), Paparahuan Inscription of 903, Limus Inscription of 915, Kambang Putih eleventh-century inscription, and Madhawapura tenth-century inscription (Wisseman-Christie 1982, 515-31).

10. In the inscriptions, *rake/rakai/rakrayan*, literally "elder brother," emerged as the personal coordinators of labor and income distributions among a number of village clusters (Casparis 1956, 233, 251). *Wanua* were under the "sphere of authority" of a *rakrayan*, whose power was more appropriately personalized than territorial or regional. See also Jones (1984, 93-101) on the fluctuations in *rakrayan* power and status during the early tenth century.

11. "Because the water of the [river] overflowed the irrigation pipes in [two named communities] . . . and [two village officials, one a *rama*, decided] to

construct an aqueduct [with the assistance of the two named *rakrayan*] . . . The Rakrayan Hujung and Rake Majawunta were grateful that when intending to go to Bantan [Bali] they were accompanied by Sang Mapatih [Balitung] and thus Bantan was conquered by them, and that is the reason they receive [this reward] from the king" (Jones 1984, 168-71).

12. Reference to trade rights demonstrates the vital role of commerce to the local economy (Wisseman-Christie 1992-93; 1998b).

13. Wicks 1992, 260-72; Copper Plate of Kancanu (Sarkar 1971-72, 1: 139-40); Copper Plate of Kwak I (Sarkar 1971-72, 1: 199).

14. Sarkar 1971-72, 2: 4-8; Kembangan Arum Charter (Sarkar 1971-72, 2: 37); Ngabean Copper-Plate of 879 (Sarkar 1971-72, 1: 223).

15. Kalasan Charter of 778 and Kelurak Charter of 782 (Sarkar 1971-72, 1: 31-48).

16. All the terms appearing on copper plate charters that refer to land investiture and consecration ceremonies are in the Old Javanese language. References to court officials, monetary values, and allusions to Hindu and Buddhist deities or Indic legal terms, on the other hand, continue to be in Sanskrit.

17. See the Karangtengah Inscription of 824, which records a *sima* grant relative to the establishment of a Buddhist sanctuary, and the Pereng Inscription of 862, which is associated with the establishment of a Siva temple (Casparis 1950, 24-50).

18. Robert Wicks (1992, 281-83) makes a strong case for a new Balinese influence coincident to Airlangga's reign and the administrative unification of Bali and eastern Java. Bali inscriptions previous to the eleventh century have greater detail specific to the royal center-periphery relationship, which is not characteristic of Java's inscriptions until after Airlangga's reign.

19. The Kamalagayan (Kelayan/Kelagen) Inscription indicates that religious payments, because of their ritual importance, were calculated in gold, while secular payments were valued in silver. (Wisseman-Christie 1982, 499-500; Wicks 1992, 281; Hall 1985, 129-35). Airlangga was the first Javanese monarch to assume the title "universal monarch" (*ratu chakravartin*). See Wisseman-Christie 1986, 74-75; Kulke 1991, 17.

20. Mabbett and Chandler (1995, 147-55) summarize the heated debate among scholars concerning the role of Angkor's reservoirs relative to Khmer agriculture.

21. See a Pimai inscription dated 1041 (Coedès 1937-66, 7: 124-26) and an inscription from Lopburi (Coedès 1961, 13-18).

22. The traditional Philippine *barangay* upstream-downstream network has neither mythologies nor genealogies, and thus no state formation (Reynolds 1995: 427).

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## **Chapter 12**

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### **The Ballgame at the Climax of the Feathered Serpent: A Religious Focus in Mesoamerica**

**Ulrich Köhler**

The ballgame was of extraordinary importance in Mesoamerica around the year 1000, when ball courts were among the most spectacular buildings, outranked only by pyramids and sometimes by the main palace.

What is Mesoamerica? It is a culture area which comprises the region of influence of complex civilizations, including the Maya or later the Aztec. Geographically, it includes central and southern Mexico, all of Guatemala and Belize, as well as the western parts of Honduras and El Salvador. In temporal terms, pre-Columbian Mesoamerica extended from around 1000 BCE, with the appearance of Olmec culture in the northern part of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, to

the early sixteenth century, when the Spaniards conquered the Aztec Empire and the other political entities of Middle America. This period of about 2,500 years is usually subdivided into phases with special characteristics in the course of cultural history. The traditional form of periodization continues to stress the distinctions between pre-Classic, Classic and post-Classic phases.



Figure 1. Head and arms of a god on a Feathered Serpent at Chichén Itzá (Krickeberg 1956, 354)

The height of the splendid Classic phase, between about 300 and 700, witnessed the simultaneous florescence of the outstanding cultures of Teotihuacan (central Mexico), the Maya (southeastern Mexico) and the Zapotec (southern Mexico), with spectacular developments in architecture, art, and (with regard to the Maya and Zapotec) astronomy and writing. In the aftermath of the Classic, impressive new innovations in astronomy and writing also occurred around the year 1000.

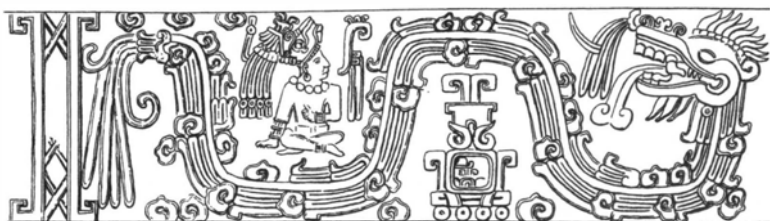


Figure 2. Feathered Serpent at Xochicalco (Seler 1902-23, 2:137)

A new approach to the cultural history of Mesoamerica distinguishes cultural horizons and intermediate periods, a concept that has proven fruitful for the understanding of the Andean area in South America. In Mesoamerica, we can indeed observe horizons with a high degree of cultural uniformity and intermediate periods when various regional

cultures expressed different developments (Köhler 1990: 19). The first horizon, lasting from about 1000 to 500 BCE, resulted from the diffusion of Olmec culture with its centers of La Venta, San Lorenzo and Tres Zapotes in the northern part of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The second horizon is associated with Teotihuacan in the Central Valley of Mexico, which extended its influence between about 200 and 550 even into the centers of the Zapotec at Monte Albán and the Maya at Tikal, Copán or Yaxchilan. The third horizon emerged around 800 and lasted to about 1150, demonstrating an impressive multi-centricity. Outstanding archaeological sites of this third horizon are Xochicalco, Cacaxtla, and a little later Tollan (Tula) in Central Mexico, El Tajín on the gulf coast of Veracruz, as well as Chichén Itzá and Uxmal in the Yucatan Peninsula. The outstanding cultural innovation uniting these centers was the cult of the feathered serpent, a deity sometimes depicted as a dragon-like being and sometimes as a mixture of human and animal, with the head and arms of a man (Figure 1). This new religious movement had its origin in central Mexico, but reached its peak in Chichén Itzá in the northern Maya area.

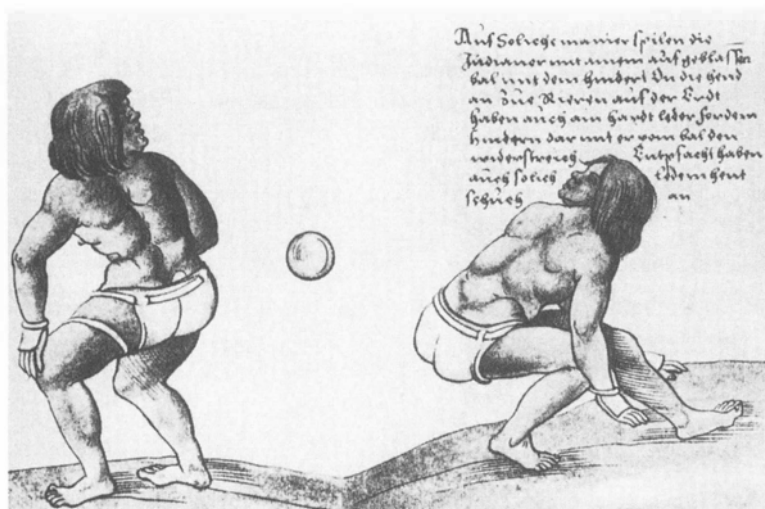


Figure 3. Mexican ballplayers in Spain in 1528 (Weiditz 1927)

Images of feathered serpents had first appeared in the culture of Teotihuacan around 300, visible on the building of La Ciudadela in a cultural context closely associated with the rain god. Their origin seems to have been inspired by cloud formations frequently observable

during heavy thunderstorms at the beginning of the rainy season in May or June. Beginning around the year 800, these images set out on a spectacular flight of dominance and expansion, simultaneously altering their character. Feathered serpents and a god in close relation with them became associated with Venus, an extraordinary god of war. As a result of this association, the feathered serpent began to appear along with warriors (Figure 2) on temples and in frescos at ball courts.

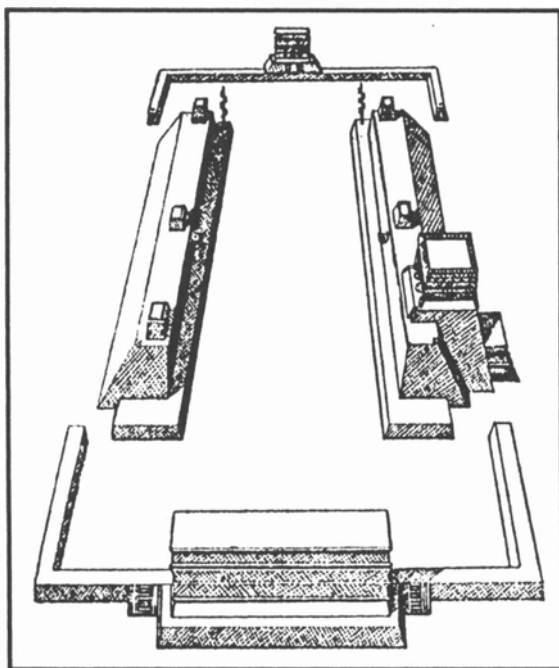


Figure 4. The Great Ball Court of Chichén Itzá  
(Krickeberg 1956, 339)

### **The Mesoamerican ballgame**

The pre-Columbian Mesoamerican ballgame appeared as early as 500 BCE in Guatemala, gained maturity during the Classic (although not attested in Teotihuacan), and reached its peak during the Post-Classic horizon. Eminently of religious character around the year 1000, mainly a sport of princes, the ballgame was played also by the common people. We have only archaeological evidence on the



florescence of the ballgame, but fortunately some of the extant ball courts contain detailed and well-preserved frescos that allow insights into their religious foundations and associated rituals. The ballgame was still played at the time of the Spanish conquest, when chroniclers recorded some important observations, but it had clearly degenerated and become largely secularized.

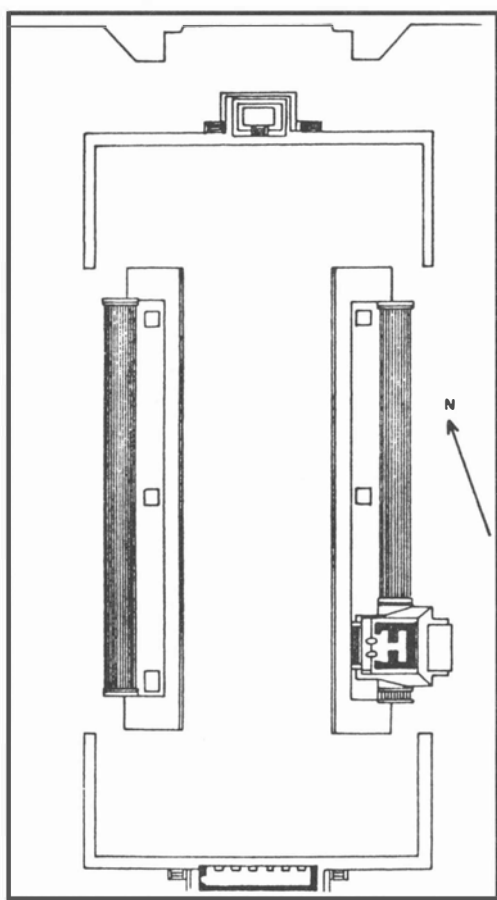


Figure 5. The Great Ball Court of Chichén Itzá  
(Taladoire 1981, front page)

The game was played with a ball of solid rubber, typically bounced only off the hip or buttocks (Figure 3) or, according to the chronicler

Durán (1967), also by the knee. It was a fault to touch the ball with any other part of the body. The two teams confronting each other tried to keep the ball in the air as long as possible, and good players could achieve this for an hour. The survival of this type of ballgame in the northwest of Mexico has been very useful for the understanding of the movements involved (Leyenaar 1988).

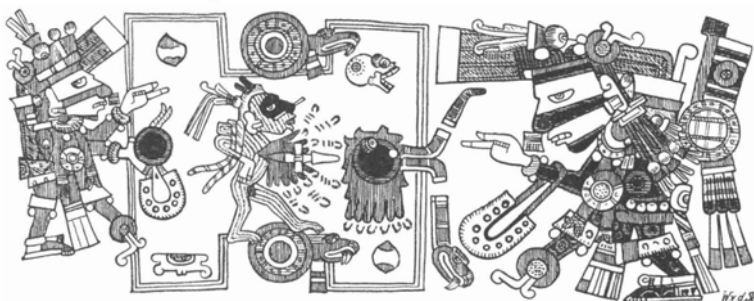


Figure 6. Ballgame between the Red and Black Tezcatlipoca in Codex Borgia (Seler 1902-23, 1:313)

There have been different types of ball courts. In its most simple form it was the rectangular field with delimited boundaries observed by Durán in the sixteenth century and even nowadays used in northwestern Mexico. The simplest form archaeologically discernible consisted of two parallel walls bounding an oblong rectangle. By the middle of the Classic a more sophisticated design added a small, oblique rectangle to each end, resulting in a court resembling an I (Figure 4). In this design, typical for the year 1000, the small rectangles attached at each end provided access to gates as in modern stadiums. Motolinia (1975) mentions an average length for a ball court of 36 meters. Durán (1967) calculated 30 meters for the central part and 45 to 60 meters including the two ends. Ball courts available through archaeological research tend to conform to the latter length, because most have extensions of between 20 and 50 meters. There are a few examples with greater lengths built during the horizon of the Feathered Serpent, the longest in Chichén Itzá measuring 146 meters (Figures 4 and 5). Around the year 1000, a major cultural center typically boasted several arenas; El Tajín had up to 17 courts covering a range of sizes (Brüggemann 1992).

The number of players and perhaps even the rules of the game could vary. According to Motolinia (1975) two played against two, three against three, or even two against three. The reliefs of the great ball

court of Chichén Itzá display teams with seven players (Grube 2000:188). Especially in a ball court of this size, it seems probable that even more players were involved. In the middle of the playing field a line traced on the ground delineated two halves. It was important to have the ball pass this line, because otherwise faults were assigned. Many arenas have stone markers in the middle of the opposing walls at center court, and a team which managed to hit the ball against them gained points. In other arenas with stone rings in the same position, the goal was to pass the ball through their holes. As attested by the chroniclers of the sixteenth century, this happened very rarely, and if a team was lucky enough to achieve it, the game was won, and all points accumulated previously were discounted.

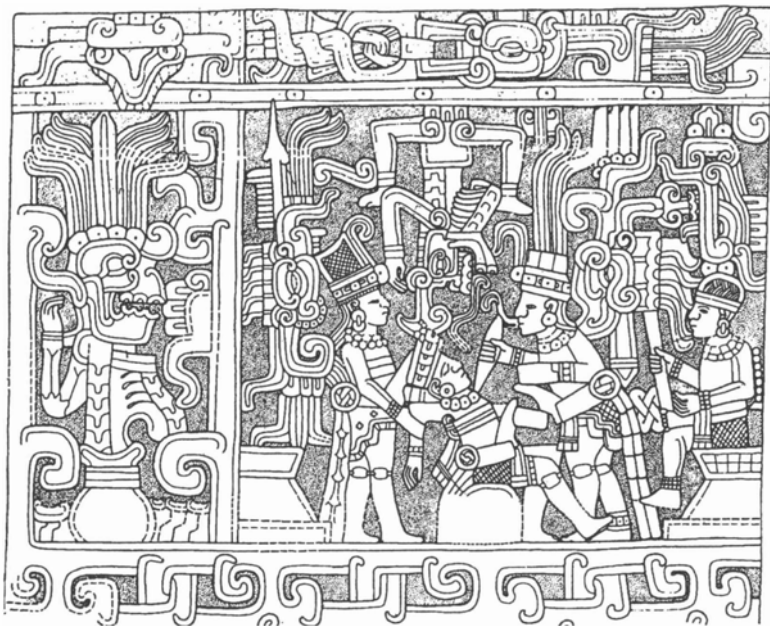


Figure 7. Sacrifice of a ballplayer in the ball court at El Tajín (Ladrón de Guevara 1999, 55)

The religious character of the pre-Columbian ballgame was still observable at the time of the conquest when it had been largely secularized. There were complex religious ceremonies at the inauguration of a new court, during which the blood of a sacrificed person was distributed. The ball courts and even certain games had

particular deities as patrons, and the games were embedded in an annual cycle of religious feasts. Codices typically show gods or priests in the guise of gods as ballplayers, exemplified by the black and red Tezcatlipoca in Codex Borgia (Figure 6).

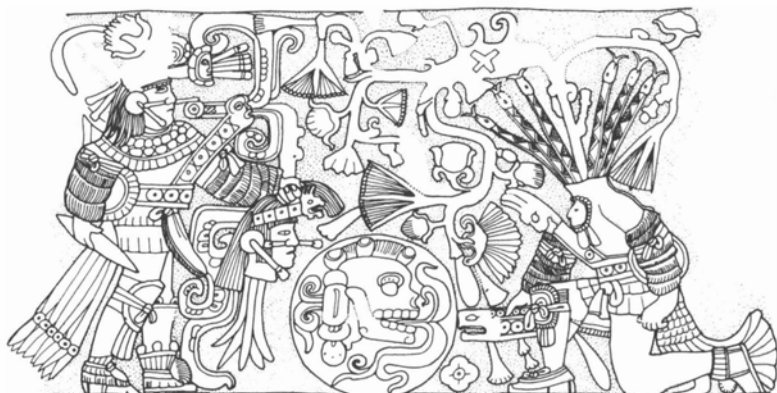


Figure 8. Sacrifice of a ballplayer at Chichén Itzá. Serpents and flowering plants spout from his beheaded neck (Schele and Miller 1986, 244)

We must assume that the movement of the ball above the ball court had a symbolic meaning. Eduard Seler (1902-23) and later Walter Krickeberg (1948) presented the theses of a symbolic relation to the course of celestial bodies like sun and moon, sun and morning star, morning and evening star, or an even more abstract representation of the struggle between day and night, bright and dark. This interpretation seems quite plausible and has been widely accepted, although it cannot be proved with certainty based on the existing sources. A relation to the sun appears in the representation of Quetzalcoatl and Xolotl as patrons of the ballgame in Codex Magliabechiano (1970), because Xolotl is known as a bearer of the sun (Codex Borbonicus 1974). Furthermore, on a golden pectoral from Monte Albán the sun and the ball court appear in close relation (Caso 1969), while on stela three of Santa Lucía Cotzumalhuapa a ballplayer makes an offering to the sun god (Taladoire 1981:713). In the famous myth of the Quiché of Guatemala the two heroes, Hunahpu and Xbalanqué, ascend to the sky as sun and moon after having defeated the gods of the underworld in a ballgame (Schultze Jena 1944). Certain doubts leveled against all astral interpretations stem from the absence in all known ball courts of any preference for particular directions (Taladoire 1979, 1981); only a

consistent alignment from east to west would support a relation with the movement of the sun.



Figure 9. Ballcourt panel from Aparicio, Veracruz, showing beheaded ballplayer (Wilkerson 1991, 57)

Solid documentation exists for the close connection between ballgame, human sacrifice, and warfare. The game was, in fact, a matter of life and death, resulting in the sacrifice of the losers or at least their leader. This is most clearly documented by frescos carved on the ball courts of El Tajín and Chichén Itzá around the year 1000. One of the six panels of the southern ball court of El Tajín depicts the sacrifice of a ballplayer, with the death god as one of the surrounding figures (Figure 7). On a panel at the ball court of Chichén Itzá even the ball is depicted as a skull (Figure 8). Absolutely convincing is the symbolic relation between agricultural fertility and the human sacrifice that followed the game. The blood spouting from the head of a decapitated ballplayer at Chichén Itzá is transformed into flowering plants; at Aparicio, a site near El Tajín, seven snakes emerge from the neck of a decapitated ballplayer (Figure 9). These examples stress the eminently

religious character of the ballgame during the third Mesoamerican cultural horizon, which receives its name from the omnipresence of the feathered serpent.

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## **Chapter 13**

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### **Gods and Worshippers on South Indian Sacred Ground<sup>1</sup>**

**Leslie C. Orr**

In 1005, in Nagapattinam, on India's southeastern coast in the Kaveri River delta, work began on the building of a Buddhist monastery under the sponsorship of the ruler of Srivijaya, a kingdom based in Sumatra (Ramachandran 1954, 16). Ten years later, in the same place, this king gave a set of jeweled ornaments to the silver image of Nakaiyalakar, "the handsome Lord of Nagapattinam," according to an inscription carved on the wall of the Siva temple (ARE 164 of 1956-57). Was this an image of the Buddha to be taken in procession, similar in form to the many bronze Buddha images of this period that have been recovered from Nagapattinam? Or, as the name of the image and sectarian traditions suggest, was this in fact an image of Lord Vishnu?



Or, since the inscription comes from a temple dedicated to the god Siva, was it this deity who was honored by the foreign ruler? In several other inscriptions at this temple dating from the same period, we read about the gifts made to the temple by merchants, local residents, and others, including the establishment of the images of Siva as the Lord of dance (Nataraja) and as the "Lord who is half woman" (Ardhanarisvara), as well as arrangements for feeding brahmanas in the temple (ARE 157-59, 162, 166 of 1956-57). Up the coast a few miles, at Nagore, was a flourishing community of Muslim traders, whose mosques and institutions of learning had already been established for several centuries (Bayly 1989, 77). The great Christian center of pilgrimage at Velanganni, just south of Nagapattinam, had not yet come into existence, but farther up the coast, in the area of what was to become Madras, was the tomb of Saint Thomas the Apostle in Mylapore, a site which, by the time of Marco Polo's visit in the thirteenth century, was also associated with a Muslim saint (Neill 1984, 49, 76-77; Bayly 1989, 260).

Eighty miles inland, on the Kaveri River, is the town of Tiruchirappalli. This was the capital of the legendary kings of the Chola dynasty, whose latter-day representatives in the year 1000 exercised their rule from the city of Tanjavur, further down the river. At the heart of Tiruchirappalli is a great rock jutting upward, the so-called Rock Fort, within which are numerous caves, including two major shrines excavated in the seventh and eighth centuries, the period of Pallava and Pandya dominance in this region. The earlier of these, the upper cave temple, is dedicated to the god Siva, and it bears an inscription dated 1000 describing an undertaking by a local landowner to support the offering of food to brahmanas, ascetics, and Sivayogis for nine days every year during the festival in the month of Chittirai (SII 17.442). Other inscriptions in the highest parts of the Rock Fort, dating from the third to eleventh centuries, record the names of Jaina ascetics (Ekamparanathan and Sivaprakasam 1987, 444-48). From the top of the rock, one can look across the river to the north and see the tall towers (*gopura*) of the great Srirangam temple dedicated to Vishnu. In the year 1000, these gopuras and the enclosing walls of which they are a part had not yet been built, but there was nonetheless considerable activity at this temple. Inscriptions of the period tell us that special food offerings of rice cakes, lentils, and fruit were prepared for festival celebrations (SII 24.20), and that Srivaishnava pilgrims were fed in the monastery (*matha*) attached to the temple (SII 24.23; 24.24). About a mile from the Rock Fort is the mosque of Abdullah Ibn Muhammad, built in the eighth century (Bayly 1989, 87), and in the years following,

Tiruchirappalli became an especially important Muslim center because of the presence of the tomb of the saint Hazarat Nathar Wali. By the early eighteenth century, the authorities at this saint's tomb and at the Srirangam temple had made arrangements to coordinate the timing of festival celebrations, and even to share the same elephants and festival paraphernalia (Bayly 1989, 117, 162-63).

The eclectic and cosmopolitan nature of Nagapattinam and Tiruchirappalli in the year 1000 is characteristic of the religious scene throughout the Tamil country. Long-distance trade and the Chola kings' imperial ambitions ensured that this part of South India remained connected through religious, cultural, commercial and political linkages not only with the north of the subcontinent, but with western, southeast, and eastern Asia. The diversity and dynamism of religious life is attested by a rich and extensive corpus of literature in Tamil and Sanskrit, the exquisite stone temples constructed in this period bearing on their walls thousands of inscriptions, and countless stone and bronze images including some of the most famous examples of Indian art. Within the multiplicity of religious practices, identities, and religious networks, we can also discern cohesion, a shared "Tamilness," and a common religious culture that seems to unify this pluralistic society while setting it apart from the rest of South Asia. What were the sources for such a distinctive regional character, and the forces that brought it into being? What relationships existed between pan-Indian models and medieval Tamil religious culture? How could individuals and groups whose sectarian differences seem so great share such a religious culture? Is our contemporary classification of religions into the categories of "Hindu," "Jaina," "Buddhist," "Muslim," etc. useful in mapping the diversity of religious beliefs and practices in Tamil Nadu around the year 1000?

This chapter will attempt to sketch out a picture of religious life in this time and place. Because of the abundance of materials of various kinds, I will focus especially on the activities of those worshipping Siva, Vishnu, and Jaina deities and enlightened beings (Tirthankaras). The essay that follows will consider two aspects of the South Indian religious scene: the cast of characters who appeared as actors in the institutions of this age, and the range of religious activities in which these people engaged. I will conclude with a discussion of their understandings of the divine or transcendent, and the relevance of these understandings to the definition of religious communities and the creation of a regional religious culture.

### Religious personnel and sacred sites

One could not describe religion in Tamil Nadu at the beginning of the eleventh century and fail to mention the building of the great temple of Tanjavur by the Chola king Rajaraja I (reigned 985-1014). This temple of Rajarajesvara (the "Lord of the King of Kings") is, however, in important respects unique.

Unlike virtually all other temples constructed of stone in the Tamil country during this period, the Tanjavur temple was not erected on a site already renowned for its sanctity. It was, instead, built at a capital city of the Chola monarchs. The design of the central shrine, and its immense size, are wonderful to behold, but extremely unusual. The only other structure that shares its spectacular scale and the pattern of its central shrine is the temple built by Rajaraja's son and successor, Rajendra I (1012-1044), at the new capital established by him at Gangaikondacholapuram.

The great temple at Tanjavur is also atypical with respect to the numbers and types of individuals who were associated with it. A lengthy and beautifully engraved inscription on the wall of the central shrine, dated 1014, records the king's order that 400 temple women (*talichcheri pentukal*) were to be established in residences in the streets around the temple (SII 2.66). Although no particular duties were assigned to these women, we can only assume that they had some function in connection with temple ceremonies. The same inscription also names 108 men who were to serve as dance masters, singers, musicians, drummers, artisans, bearers, or accountants, while another record gives the names of 48 men, termed *pitararkal*, who were charged with the responsibility of reciting sacred hymns (*tiruppatiyan*) (SII 2.65). In another extremely long inscription (SII 2.69), Rajaraja decreed that each of the brahmana villages of the region would have to supply one or two celibate students (*mani*) to serve as priestly assistants in the temple; more than 175 young men were to be so mobilized. Other villages were to supply watchmen, whose numbers amounted to nearly 150 (SII 2. 57 and 2.70). Nowhere else do we see such an enormous corps of service personnel.

The temple at Tanjavur employed an exceptionally large number of women. Outside of the Rajarajesvara temple, the largest groups of temple women we encounter are a group of 32 women at the Siva temple of Dadapuram, who were ordered to sing and dance at the festivals for Vishnu and Siva by Kundavai, the sister of Rajaraja I (ARE 14 of 1919). We also find a group of 24 "fly whisk women" (*kavarippinakal*), who served as attendants for the deity at the temple

of Tiruvorriyur (SII 3.143). In fact, bearing fly whisks is the ritual function for women most frequently mentioned in inscriptions of this period. Although there are a few references, like that from Dadapuram, to her participation in festival dance, the temple woman of the year does not resemble her more recent counterpart, the South Indian



Figure 1. South India and Sri Lanka around the year 1000

*devadasi*, whose expertise in dance seems to have developed many centuries later. In fact, the inscriptions that refer to temple women far more frequently feature them as temple patrons, rather than as temple servants (Orr 2000a).

The Rajarajesvara temple also seems to stand apart in its doctrinal orientation, and here we catch a glimpse of one of the most important trends in South Asian religious organization: the growth of sectarianism. Rajendra I decreed in 1031 (SII 2.20) that the job of preceptor (*acharya*) in the temple was to belong to “our lord” Sarvasivapandita Saivacharya and to others who were qualified, including the Saivacharya’s students and his students’ students coming from the “northern country” (Aryadesa), the “middle country” (Madhyadesa), and Bengal (Gauda). It appears that the temple’s preceptor in Rajaraja’s time had been one Pavana Pitaraṇ, who is mentioned in a list of donors to the temple that also includes Rajaraja’s own guru, Isanasiva Pandita (SII 2.90). The names Sarvasiva, Isanasiva and the very similar names borne by the 48 hymn singers employed in the temple point toward a sectarian identity associated with the school of Saiva Siddhanta. Such names indicate initiation according to the prescriptions of the Sanskrit ritual and philosophical texts known as the Agamas, and, in fact, are borne by the authors of the digests (*paddhati*) of Agama material that began to be composed in the Tamil country in the twelfth century. Around the year 1000, one rarely encounters such names in inscriptions outside the Tanjavur temple; hymn-singers never bear these names, and only a handful of those whom we might identify as priests do so. There is little evidence in the inscriptions of even the later Chola period that Saiva Siddhanta preceptors carried out or guided the conduct of temple ritual, or that Rajaraja’s royal temple provided a model for their participation in temple organization or ceremonial.

South Indian Saiva Siddhanta draws on Tamil roots in the devotional poetry composed between the seventh and ninth centuries by the poet-saints known as the Nayanmars (see below), but Tamil Saiva philosophical writings, and the lineage of south Indian Saiva preceptors associated with Meykantar, only appear in the twelfth century. Up until this point, the philosophical and ritual texts important for South Indian Saiva Siddhanta, such as *Tattvaparakasa* and *Somasambhupaddhati*, were composed in Sanskrit by north Indian authors (Sivaraman 1973; Goodall 2000b).<sup>2</sup> Starting in the twelfth century, a number of South Indian authors, like Aghorasiva and Umapati, were producing works in Sanskrit, including digests, commentaries, and even “updated” redactions of the Agamas themselves. This literature reveals the

philosophical evolution of South Indian Saiva Siddhanta, as well as changes that were taking place in temple practices beginning in the eleventh century. These texts also point toward a more general shift in the South Indian Saiva tradition in which “public” temple worship came to overshadow the individual ritual and yoga practices of the initiate (Brunner 1988; Goodall 2000a, 2000b; Dagens and Barazer-Billoret 2000, 1-li). Although we cannot locate specific Saiva Siddhanta authors who were active in Tamil Nadu around the year 1000, it seems certain that there were Saiva teachers at this time who were transmitting and redacting ritual texts that were, increasingly, relevant to the context of the temple.

We see close parallels among the worshippers of Vishnu. Just as Saiva Siddhanta was developing in this period in the South, so too was the Srivaishnava movement – associated with its own scriptures (the Pancharatra and Vaikhanasa texts) and an emerging lineage of preceptors, including Nathamuni (early 10th century?), Yamuna (d. 1038), and Ramanuja (d. 1137). Yet the inscriptions of this time in Vaishnava temples do not indicate that Srivaishnava teachers were shaping temple practices or serving as priests, despite the later traditions that celebrate the connections between the early preceptors and the great Vishnu temples of the South, such as the shrine at Srirangam (Hari Rao 1961; Raman 1971). Whatever the inscriptions do and do not tell us, however, the literature of this period makes it clear that at least some of the sectarian preceptors were deeply concerned with temple ritual. Yamuna’s *Agama Pramanya* is a strongly-worded defense of the legitimacy of the practices of the Bhagavatas, the devotees of Vishnu, including “the rites of temple-building, erection of idols, prostration, circumambulation, and particular festival ceremonies” prescribed by the Pancharatra texts (Buitenen 1971, 119; Neevel 1977).

In describing the various individuals who figured in temple life, the inscriptions (especially when we ignore those of the Tanjavur temple) use a vocabulary that is quite different from that of the Agamas (Smith 1975; Orr 1993; Davis forthcoming). The word *acharya* rarely appears. To designate priestly activity, the inscriptions more often use Tamil forms of the Sanskrit terms for honoring/praising (*archana*) or homage/worship (*aradhana*). But, surprisingly (given their focus on the conduct of the affairs of the temple), the inscriptions of this period mention priests quite infrequently. At times, we find indications that the person appointed to perform worship was a brahmana, but in many cases this is not at all obvious. Among the inscriptions that refer to priests are several recording the purchase or sale of rights to perform

worship and receive remuneration for this service (expressed in terms of the ownership of “shares” or “days” at the temple). These references point to the non-hereditary character of sacerdotal positions, contrasting with the prescriptions of the Agamas and the system of later times (Brunner 1964; Buitenen 1971, 102; Smith 1975, 80-81; Orr 2000a, 78, 250-51). It is especially interesting to see that the same terms are used for the chief ritual officiant regardless of the sectarian context in which he served. For example, an inscription dated 995 from the Jaina temple of Tirunarungondai records a woman’s gift of land to support two people who would perform worship (*aradhana*) and offer food at the Sribali ritual (SII 7.1017).

In a few cases we do see the use of sectarian terminology in inscriptions of this period – references to Vaikhanasas, Srivaishnavas, Sivabrahmanas, and Srimahesvaras (devotees of Siva) – but this is much more characteristic of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. When we do encounter this terminology, either in the earlier or later Chola periods, it is difficult to determine what it signified: membership in a community of devotees or in a more restricted circle of initiates, a professional designation for a ritual specialist, or an indication of location within a particular family or caste? According to the inscriptions of the later Chola period, individuals and groups bearing sectarian titles most frequently fulfilled roles in temple administration (Orr 1995). But an array of different people, often members of the local brahmana assembly (*sabhaiyar*) or “townspeople” (*nagarattar*), also carried out tasks such as managing temple resources or representing the temple by accepting gifts on the god’s behalf. Such figures eventually would be displaced by temple authorities, including those with sectarian titles, but in our period administrators attached to the temple were rarely sectarians, bearing instead more neutral designations like “god workers” (*tevarkanmikal*) or “performers of sacred work” (*srikaryam ceyvar*). This last term refers not only to professional temple managers, but also appears as an honorific title, borne by men who were not part of the corps of temple service personnel and who may have been residents of distant locations (Heitzman 1997, 187). Two such men appear as donors to the Rajarajesvara temple, one in an inscription engraved during Rajaraja’s reign and the other engraved in 1015 during Rajendra’s reign (SII 2.36 and 2.41); there is no indication that their titles have any functional significance. Several inscriptions at the Tanjavur temple describe the god Chandesvara as bearing responsibility for investing the resources donated to the god, but no human individuals or groups who were in charge of management are mentioned until 1058, when Rajendra

addresses a royal order to the “performer of sacred work” and to temple accountants (SII 2.67). It seems probable that the affairs of the Tanjavur temple were, exceptionally, in the hands of Chola court functionaries.

If temple priests and managers are not as visible on the temple scene as we might expect, many other actors are present in the year 1000. Particularly in evidence are drummers (*uvachchar*), very frequently encountered in bands of five or seven men charged with “beating *sribali*” and performing critical roles in festivals. So essential were they to the conduct of daily ritual that when the drummers of the temple at Tiruvilangudi left town, the *sribali* ceremony and all other processions had to be suspended; fortunately, the temple was able to arrange support for a new group of five drummers and a conch player, so that sacred services could be resumed after the lapse of a year (IPS 89). In an inscription dated 992 from Kuttalam, we see a group of twelve drummers given the responsibility of performing “at the time of the sacred bath, and at the times of the food offerings, *bhutabali*, *sribali*, the late night service, and the early morning service” (SII 13.170, translated in Orr 2000a, 89-91; Balasubrahmanyam 1971, 176). This arrangement for the employment of drummers is just one element in a whole program instituted at the Kuttalam temple by Queen Sembiyan Mahadevi, the widow of the Chola king Gandaraditya, the mother of Uttama Chola (Rajaraja I’s predecessor), and the great-aunt of Rajaraja I. The queen also supported brahmanas to perform worship (*aradhana*), the *manis* who carried out the three daily services, a priest (*nampi*) and those who provided him with assistance (*paricharakam*), gardeners and garland-makers, singers of hymns (*tiruppatiyam*), brahmanas reciting Vedic texts, fly whisk women, watchmen, people to clean the temple courtyard, potters, devotees, ascetics, accountants, and a temple manager. At temples that did not receive such generous support, the numbers and types of temple personnel were more limited, but many of the same figures appear even in smaller establishments, with hymn-singers, gardeners and garland makers becoming increasingly prominent in the eleventh century.

### **Devotional communities and practices**

Because colonial, Indological, and Indian nationalist thought has promoted the idea that South Asia’s “original” religious essence was wholly spiritual and other-worldly, scholars have tended to deprecate the “externals” of religious practice, including the worship of images,



as latter-day accretions. Many have viewed the economic relationships linking the outer world to the religious virtuoso engaged in the contemplative inner life as unfortunate, if inevitable, signs of spiritual decline (Waghorne 1994, 85-103, 255-62; Orr 2000b). The South Indian context clearly shows that the building of temples, the consecration of images, and the sponsorship of worship were not inferior or auxiliary to more "fundamental" religious practices. We need not focus exclusively on the self-interest of patrons (e.g. their quest for fame and personal welfare), since their gift giving, the religious activity most in evidence in the public archive, expresses equally the religious values of renunciation, selflessness, reverence, and dedication of oneself.

Gift giving involved members of every religious community and virtually every type of person, including men and women, priests and preceptors, ascetics and yogis, and Jaina renunciants. After the twelfth century, rulers belonging to the later Pandya or Hoysala dynasties, the Vijayanagara Emperors, and the Nayaka kings became heavily involved in donation activity throughout South India, shaping temple life through major building projects or new festivals. But apart from the spectacular royal projects at Tanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram, this degree of engagement in temple projects was rare among the early Chola rulers (Kaimal 1996). Female members of the royal court were more likely to initiate construction and donations for temples. The outstanding example is Sembiyan Mahadevi, whom we have just met, but she was not alone; her daughters-in-law, her palace women, Rajaraja's queens, Chola princesses, and many other royal women were active as donors (Venkataraman 1976; Spencer 1983; Kaimal 1998 and 1999; Orr 2000a, 67-84; Orr 2000b). The great bulk of gifts made to temples did not come from the court, but from the general public. People who donated land, money, livestock, and other kinds of property included merchants and shepherds, brahmanas and temple women, local "lords" and their wives and daughters. Even in the case of extravagant endowments involving rebuilding and the rearrangement of temple affairs (like Sembiyan Mahadevi's grant to the Kuttalam temple), most were made by non-royal people (Orr 2000a, 232 n.1). Many donors made gifts to temples at some distance from their places of residence; although less pronounced in 1000 than in 1200, these long-range patterns of gift-giving were already of significance in creating networks throughout the Tamil country (Heitzman 1997, 181-205; Orr 2000a, 79-84).

The tenth and early eleventh centuries in Tamil Nadu were a peak period for the presentation of substantial gifts to temples dedicated to

Siva; many of the major Vaishnava centers received the bulk of their support in subsequent centuries. Nonetheless, temple patrons were not exclusive in their sponsorship of sectarian institutions. Temples dedicated to Siva were perhaps more numerous than other kinds of shrines, but donors with "Saiva" names made gifts to a variety of sacred sites, and some donors supported several different types of institutions. One striking example is the sponsorship by Rajaraja's sister Kundavai of Vaishnava, Saiva and Jaina temples at Dadapuram (ARE 8 and 17 of 1919). Jaina sacred sites seem to have particularly enjoyed patronage in the eighth and ninth centuries. The sponsorship of Buddhist images (which may or may not have been destined for Buddhist shrines, for there are virtually no extant structures) was characteristic of the thirteenth century and even later times (Orr 2000b). The epigraphic, archaeological, and art historical evidence suggests that devotional practices rather than ascetic ones were being supported. Shrines, far more often than monasteries (*matha* or Jaina *palli*), were offered patronage. Almost always, the gods, Tirthankaras or Buddhas, rather than ascetics, preceptors or brahmanas, received gifts.

The kinds of religious activities supported by gifts included the production of images and the building of shrines, the bathing and adorning of images, arrangements for offerings of lamps, food, and flowers, and the employment of service personnel who were charged with preparations for and management of worship. As we move from the tenth to the eleventh century, we observe changes in the pattern of patronage. Perpetually burning oil lamps supported by the donation of herds of animals, earlier the most popular kind of gift, were in decline; endowments for food offerings and for the provision of flower garlands for the deities, often supported by grants of land or money, were increasing. Arrangements for temple festivals were also on the rise. But perhaps the most interesting liturgical development is the increasing incorporation into temple rituals of the Tamil hymns of the Saiva and Vaishnava poet-saints, the Nayanmars and the Alvars.

The Saiva hymns, referred to as *tiruppatiyam* in the inscriptions, were being recited or sung in temples from at least the ninth century, overlapping with the era of the Nayanmars themselves (Nilakantha Sastri 1955, 637-38).<sup>3</sup> The collection of the hymns of the Saiva poet-saints is attributed to Nampi Antar Nampi, whose exact date is unknown, but who may have lived in the early tenth century. According to the fourteenth-century account of Umapati in the *Tirumuraikanta Puranam*, the Chola ruler had heard a fragment of one of the hymns, and requested Nampi to find the rest of them. Nampi

discovered that manuscripts were in a sealed chamber at the Chidambaram temple, but the priests of the temple refused access, saying that they could open the room only if the authors of the hymns were present. Nampi and his royal patron consecrated images of the three most prolific poets (Appar, Sampantar, and Santarar, the authors of the *Tevaram*) and brought the images in procession. The doors to the chamber miraculously opened, revealing the manuscripts, partly eaten by white ants. Nampi took these manuscripts and, adding other hymns including some of his own works, arranged the contents in eleven books. Having discovered a woman whose family had preserved the ancient tunes, he was able to set the hymns to music and make them suitable for performance in the temple (Zvelebil 1975, 132-33; Cutler 1987, 50).

The story of the canonization of the corpus of Vaishnava hymns is very similar. The recovery of the compositions of the twelve Alvars in this case was made by Nathamuni, the first of the Srivaishnava preceptors, who seems to have lived at the beginning of the tenth century. The story recounted in the chronicle of Srirangam, the *Koyil Oluku*, and in a number of Srivaishnava hagiographies, describes how Nathamuni had heard a verse of Nammalvar's *Tiruvaymoli*, and made it his mission to recover all of the hymns. Going to Nammalvar's birthplace, he went into a trance after reciting a poem in praise of the poet-saint 12,000 times, and while in this state experienced a vision of Nammalvar, who taught him all the Alvars' hymns. Returning to his own hometown (Udaiyargudi, also known as Kattumannargudi or Viranarayanapuram), Nathamuni gathered a group of disciples and had them sing the hymns there. Then he went to Srirangam, where he established (or re-established, according to the *Koyil Oluku*) the annual festival of the recitation of all the hymns. After his death, his two nephews carried on the tradition, and became the founders of the special class of hymn singers within the Srivaishnava tradition known as the *araiyar* (Hari Rao 1961; Zvelebil 1975, 152-54; Cutler 1987, 44-45). The inscriptions do not use this term for hymn singers, but beginning in the early eleventh century we begin to see references in Vaishnava temples to the singing of hymns.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the Srivaishnava tradition's understanding of the importance of Srirangam in the establishment of the hymns of the Alvars in temple liturgy, we see only a few people identified in Chola-period inscriptions as singers or reciters at this temple (Orr 1995). Similarly for the Saiva tradition's special connection with Chidambaram, where there is just a single reference, in an early eleventh-century inscription, to arrangements for supporting a reciter of *Tiruttantattokai*, Santarar's

song of praise to the Nayanmars (SII 4.223). But if we have few references to hymn-singing at these two temples, the original hymnists themselves were honored in the tenth century at Chidambaram and in the twelfth century at Srirangam, where bronze images of the saints were the objects of worship and figured in temple processions (Champakalakshmi 1981, 244; Dehejia 1988b, 139). Such images were a new feature on the South Indian temple scene around the year 1000. The Saiva saints of the *Tevaram* trio begin to be represented in image form in the tenth century.<sup>5</sup> Among the Vaishnava saints, Tirumangai Alvar, who was reputed to have stolen the golden Buddha images of Nagapattinam, seems to be the first to appear (Champakalakshmi 1981, 240-41).

The poems of the Nayanmars and Alvars, composed in the period of the seventh to ninth centuries, closely resemble each other. As songs of praise and supplication, the hymns typically direct attention to the manifestation of the deity at a particular shrine in the Tamil country, and may exhort devotees to come and join others in travelling to a place where the Lord is present. The poems describe the worship of the deity's image with flowers, incense, lamps, water, drums, chanting and singing, instrumental music, food offerings, and fragrant pastes. They glorify the beauty of the Lord, his wisdom and great deeds, and his power to free worshippers from sin and misery.

The Saiva or Vaishnava religious themes and devotional ethos, which had become widespread in the year 1000, find striking parallels in contemporary Tamil devotional literature composed by Buddhists. While there is no Buddhist figure equivalent to Nathamuni or Nampi Antar Nampi whose efforts resulted in the canonization of a liturgical corpus, Anne Monius argues that the Buddhist Peruntevanar's compilation of Buddhist devotional poetry in his commentary on *Viracholiyam* (composed by his teacher Puttamittiran) represents a very similar process, an "imagining of religious community through literature," fixing "a poetic vision to be passed down from generation to generation" (Monius 2001, 154). This poetic vision has its counterpart in an artistic vision, in the form of stone and bronze Buddha images, dating from the tenth to the sixteenth centuries, some of which are inscribed with the names of donors or the names of the Buddha, who may be identified as the Lord of a particular place (Ramachandran 1954; Dehejia 1988a).

Similar phenomena appear in Jaina sources. For example, the texts *Jivakachinatamani* and *Nilakesi*, composed in the early and later part of the tenth century respectively, contain passages praising the Tirthankara as Lord of the Three Worlds, extolling his qualities, and

showing his followers worshipping his feet (Chakravarti 1936; Kandaswamy 1981). As for physical evidence, most of the older Jaina centers fell into disuse after the thirteenth century, but many images of Tirthankaras and Jaina goddesses, along with their inscriptions, survive on the rock faces of remote hillsides. One such site, which has been in continuous worship since at least the ninth century, is Tirumalai, near Polur. Here a number of inscriptions from around the year 1000 record donations including the provision of lamps and food offerings for the Tirthankara, who is referred to as the god (*deva*) of Tirumalai or as the lord (*alvar*) of the monastery (*palli*). Arrangements were also in place for feeding one honored master (*atikal*) and for the repair of the images of the yaksha and yakshi, Jaina deities who frequently appear as attendants of the Tirthankaras (SII 1.67, 1.68, 1.75, 1.76, 3.97, 23.65). Many of the donors here were women, and the shrine is referred to in one of the inscriptions as the Kundavai Jinalayam, suggesting that the sister of Rajaraja I may have been a special patron (Desai 1957, 42-46; Soundara Rajan 1975, 133-34, 152f.). These inscriptions indicate that Jaina institutions resembled sacred sites dedicated to Siva and Vishnu with respect to the character of worship being carried out, not only in terms of the general notion of service to a divine or superior represented in image form, but in terms also of the specifics of that service, including the offering of lamps and food and the celebration of festivals. We find precisely the same vocabulary of food offerings (*amutu*) and worship (*archana* or *aradhana*) (Orr 1999).

### Community and renunciation

In contrast to the plentiful epigraphical evidence for worship activities among Jainas in early medieval Tamil Nadu, we find much less evidence for the ascetic practices usually considered characteristic of Jainism. The indications of asceticism that we do find include the provision of food for male ascetics (*tapasikal*, *vairagyar*) and records of the religious fast to death (Orr 1999). One might argue that the centrality of worship in the Jaina inscriptions is only to be expected, due to their character as records of religious gifts. But, in fact, inscriptions are quite capable of reflecting other facets of religious life. When we compare, for example, the content of Jaina inscriptions from Tamil Nadu with contemporary records from Karnataka, we find that the latter emphasize the ascetic dimension of religious practice (Desai 1957, 99-161). Tamil inscriptions, particularly in the two or three centuries before the year 1000, do feature a number of Jaina religious

men and religious women. Their titles are “teacher” (*kuravar* or *achirikar* for men and *kuratti* for women), “disciple” (*manakkan* for men and *manakkiyar* for women), or “honored person” (*patarar* or *atikal*, applied almost exclusively to men) – never “monk” or “nun” as in inscriptions outside Tamil Nadu. There are no direct indications that they renounced family life or underwent ordination, and there are only a handful of references to their association with monastic groups to which Jaina renunciants generally belonged (*sangha* or *gachchha*). Instead, their identities lay in their membership in teaching lineages, including female lineages, and with reference to particular localities. Jaina religious women and men in Tamil Nadu seem to have led settled lives, possessed and donated wealth, and been involved with image worship. In these respects, they had more in common with local laypersons than they did with established pan-Indian Jaina monastic orders or normative standards (Orr 1998; Orr 1999).

Some of these people, particularly men, were associated with Jaina establishments (*palli*), which in the early centuries CE had served primarily as residences for mendicants. Epigraphic and literary evidence indicates that by the fifth or sixth centuries, the *palli* was a center for feeding and sheltering ascetics and pilgrims, but also a place of worship. The dwelling places of religious Jains were also places where images of the Tirthankaras and female deities (*yakshi*) were set up, often by religious men and women themselves (Orr 1998; Orr 1999).

Around the year 1000, and increasingly during the next few centuries, we begin to see evidence of similar institutions called *matha*, associated with Saiva and Vaishnava temples. Like the *palli*, the *matha* combined several institutional functions, including devotional activities and the provision of food and shelter for devotees, students, and pilgrims. The great majority of the inscriptions with references to *matha* depict them as feeding houses, rather than monasteries.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, among those who were received in the *matha*, we do find ascetics (*tapasyar*, *yogi*). These individuals do not seem to have been organized into monastic groups, nor are they clearly connected to the Saiva Siddhanta or Srivaishnava sectarian communities.

There were, however, members of these communities who were indeed preoccupied with the question of renunciation. Yadava Prakasa, an early teacher of the great preceptor Ramanuja, originally held to a non-dualist (Advaita) Vedanta philosophy, but was “converted” by his student to qualified non-dualism (Visishtadvaita). Later, probably in the middle of the eleventh century, he composed the *Yatidharma-samuchchaya*, or the “Rules and Regulations of Brahmanical

Asceticism" (Olivelle 1995). Yadava's effort was to demonstrate that a life of renunciation is not inconsistent with the Vedas, and he extensively cited *Dharmasastra* texts to make his point. The form of asceticism he advocated incorporates both dedication to brahmanical ritual and devotion to Vishnu. This way of life, in which the renouncer would not abandon his ritual duties or the insignia of his status as a brahmana (e.g. the sacred thread and the hair tuft), became the model for renunciation within the Srivaishnava community. It pointedly diverged from the model of the Dasanami renunciants established by the Advaita teacher Sankara several centuries earlier.<sup>7</sup> Later Srivaishnava preceptors went even further in "domesticating" or "laicizing" the path of renunciation, by equating it with surrender to Vishnu (Narayanan 1990).

The term Vaikhanasa is applied to a group of Vaishnava Agamas that concern themselves with, among other things, the conduct of temple ritual. The Vaikhanasas' connections with ascetic values and sectarian identity seemed to be undergoing change in this period, for in earlier literature, the Vaikhanasa is identified as a renunciant. The Pancharatra text, *Sanatkumara Samhita*, which appears to date from before the eleventh century (it is quoted by Yamuna), describes the Vaikhanasa as one who is in the life stage of "forest-dweller," living apart from society, but accompanied by his wife and sons and leading a settled life. The Vaikhanasa texts themselves reject such an image, and depict the temple priest as a householder, without any marks of the renunciant (Colas 1996, 54-57). The inscriptions provide a mixed picture, especially with respect to the sectarian affiliations of the Vaikhanasa. There are several references from the tenth and eleventh centuries to Vaikhanasas performing priestly duties or acting as managers in temples dedicated to Vishnu, but in one case we find a Vaikhanasa being offered support to perform worship for Surya, the sun god (SII 3.187). The lack of an exclusively Vaishnava identity is further indicated by a tenth-century inscription recording the gift of a Vaikhanasa for lamps to be burned at a festival in the Siva temple at Siddhalingamadam (SII 19.227).

Inscriptions and devotional literature indicate that Saiva sectarians were concerned to differentiate themselves from the Jainas, much as the Srivaishnavas sought to establish their distance from the Advaitins. In the Saiva case, the anxiety to fix this boundary seems to have sprung from the similarities between their institutions and religious practices and those of the Jainas (Davis 1998; Orr 1999). The poems of the Nayanmars express hostility towards the Jainas, while at the same time pointing toward shared practices. Appar's seventh-century description

of Saiva devotees suggests that wandering Saivas were not very different from Jaina mendicants, in terms of their dependence on the provision of food by householders.<sup>8</sup> But the Saiva poet-saints refer with opprobrium to Jaina habits of taking food (fasting at night, eating with both hands, eating while standing). The Saivite saint Sampantar says that the “virtuous souls” who worship at Siva’s shrine shield themselves from the “wretched Jain monks who live on a diet of bitter fruit and dried ginger served on the marutu leaf” (*Tevaram* 1.6.9, trans. Peterson 1989, 192). Tamil Jainas, for their part, focus their food polemics on animal sacrifice and meat eating which, according to the tenth-century *Nilakesi*, characterized traditional Vedic religion, goddess-worship, and Buddhism (Chakravarti 1936, 136-37, 146-51, 159-72, 194-95, 208-14, 312-19).

The wandering Saiva devotees described by Appar would, in later centuries, be received at temples, where they would be offered food. Probably most alms-giving continued to be private, informal, individual, and domestically based, rather than taking place in the public, permanent, and formal contexts recorded in the inscriptions. But it appears that institutions were usurping some of the functions of giving alms, and that the alms-giving transaction was transformed by institutionalization. Feeding came to be a means through which the temple or the sectarian community could confer honor and recognition for patronage, service, and leadership. These developments may have had the effect of minimizing women’s participation in religious life, as the mendicant turned away from the housewife’s doorstep and headed toward the temple or the matha. Encounters between ascetic men and householder women were in any case considered problematic, as indicated by the instructions for begging alms found in the Saiva Agamas and in the Vaishnava *Yatidharmasamuchchaya*, which warn of the dangers posed by women’s impurity and sexuality (Orr 1993; Olivelle 1995, 105-07).

### **Sacred offerings**

The inscriptions of the year 1000 are full of references to the procurement of raw foodstuffs and the preparation of meals for temple deities. Among the components of these food offerings were rice, clarified butter, pulses, various types of vegetable curry, yogurt, milk, bananas and other kinds of fruit, and the after-dinner treat of betel and areca nut. Some inscriptions provide details about the flavoring and spicing of foods, mentioning salt and black pepper, tamarind and lime,



mustard, turmeric, cardamom, and sugar. But the gods were not the only ones who enjoyed the food prepared in the temple.

At Saiva or Vaishnava temples in the late tenth century, brahmanas were by far the most prominent among human recipients of temple food. The inscriptions provide us with an indication of why they may have been considered worthy to be offered food: many of them are referred to as "Veda-knowing" (*vedam vallan*). But brahmanas began to be displaced in the eleventh century by other kinds of food recipients, including "devotees" (*atiyar*, *tevaratiyar*, *antar*) and people designated by sectarian terms (*sivayogi*, *mahesvara*, *sivabrahmana*, and *srivaishnava*) who were frequently, and in large numbers, fed at temple festivals. The shift signals a reorientation of concepts of religious "worthiness." Esteem and honor at temples were now offered to individuals who were affiliated with, or recognized as leaders within, sectarian devotional and ascetic communities rather than those learned in the Veda and brahmanical ritual.

We read very little in the inscriptions about the distribution of the food or other substances offered at a temple, "consumed" by the deity, and thereby imbued with spiritual power as the "grace" (*prasadam*) of the deity. Although the feeding of brahmanas, devotees, and sectarians may have coincided with food offerings made to the gods, consecrated food was only rarely offered to them. The few references we have to *prasadam* are almost all from the thirteenth century, and for the most part describe the distribution of food offerings to donors and temple servants; here we see the beginning of a system of temple "honors" that would become significant in the late pre-colonial and colonial periods. In the early Chola period, however, there does not seem to have been anything that resembled a system for *prasadam* distribution.

Practices associated with the use of consecrated food that are described in Chola-period inscriptions, particularly those from Saiva temples, are not, in fact, consistent with the prescriptions of the Agamas. According to these latter texts, God's leftovers (*nirmalya*), the food and other substances that have been offered to Siva, are too pure to be distributed among or consumed by his worshippers (Brunner 1969; Davis 1991, 154-57). Although South Indian Saiva temples today distribute sacred ash as *prasadam*, in contrast to Vaishnava temples, where devotees receive consecrated food as a temple honor, half of the Chola-period inscriptions mentioning food *prasadam* come from temples dedicated to Siva. Even members of the Vaishnava community, whose ritual texts sanctioned the consumption of *nirmalya*, felt they had to defend this practice. Yamuna, in his *Agama Pramanaya*, devotes considerable attention to this topic, arguing against the notion

that taking such “leftover” food would be an offense against the ritual purity to be maintained by the brahmana. Quoting extensively from the Pancharatra Agamas,<sup>9</sup> Yamuna puts forward the following view:

The saffron, sandal, camphor and oils that have been taken off Vishnu’s body are supremely purifying. . . [as are] the perfume, flowers etc., (the water) of the idol’s bath etc., and the curds, milk, etc. Those who condemn this divine purifying agent because they consider it *nirmalya*, those witless detractors of its power will go to hell (van Buitenen 1971, 117).

### **Divinity and community**

The opponents whom Yamuna attacks with such vehemence were those brahmanas who did not accept that devotion to Vishnu was compatible with adherence to Vedic principles. In the *Agama Pramanya*, Yamuna is particularly concerned with reconciling the ritual obligations that are incumbent on the devotee and on the brahmana. This undertaking and Yamuna’s efforts in his other works have the aim of “integrating the classical and the popular,” in the phrase of Walter Neevel (1977) – the “classical” represented by the Vedanta philosophical tradition and the “popular” by the context of yoga and worship described in the Pancharatra texts. It is not at all clear that this second context really can be considered “popular,” but Yamuna was not alone in attempting to defend its orthodoxy.

When we compare earlier and later examples of the Saiva and Vaishnava Agamas, we can discern an evolution in which “Vedicized” ritual observances came to replace Tantric elements, a more orthodox framework for eligibility to participate in temple ritual was gradually introduced, and the concerns of the temple priest, rather than of the guru and the initiate, became more and more central (Gupta 1983; Brunner 1988; Surdam 1988; Colas 1996, 119-29, 140-48, 350-53; Goodall 2000a). These changes seem to reflect an effort to establish the Vedic credentials of the Agamic ritual complex and to harmonize the two classes of revealed scripture, the Vedas and the Agamas.

Another, and parallel, form of integration taking place around the year 1000 was literary, as Sanskrit and Tamil poetic and linguistic traditions came to be intermingled in sophisticated and original ways. By the twelfth century, in the Srivaishnava community, the doctrine of a double Vedanta (*ubhayavedanta*) that included the Veda and the hymns of the Alvars came to be expressed in its very language, with commentaries on the hymns composed in “coral and pearls”

(*manipravala*), a mixture of Tamil and Sanskrit. We also find by the twelfth century that Saiva Siddhanta authors were producing texts in both languages. Preceptors from both sectarian backgrounds show a profound understanding of earlier Tamil literary forms and themes, as well as knowledge of Sanskrit literary conventions. This combination is especially powerful also in the case of the tenth-century Jaina author Amitasagarar's treatise on Tamil versification, and the eleventh-century Buddhist author Puttamittiran's treatise on Tamil poetics and grammar (Monius 2001). If this was the "age of vernacularization," as Pollock suggests, the vernacular in question, Tamil, was manifesting itself as a language of beauty, depth and elegance in the hands of these experts. We might reconsider whether it really is as "abundantly clear," as Pollock maintains, that "in virtually every case we can historically capture. . . [there] is the role of the court in the vernacular turn" (Pollock 1998, 31). In the Tamil country, it was preeminently a development occurring within religious literature.

In religious art we may discern further evidence of vernacularization, in which Sanskritic or pan-Indian models were adapted and took on a distinctive regional style. Certain deities, and particular aspects of deities, were coming into prominence in the Tamil country in ways that are not seen elsewhere. One such case is that of the Jaina goddesses or yakshis. Beginning in about the fifth century, in sculptures from various parts of India, representations of the 24 Tirthankaras appeared with flanking male/female, yaksha/yakshi couples. In Tamil Nadu by the year 1000, however, the yakshis had abandoned their roles as attendants, and became independent objects of worship in their own right (Desai 1957; Orr 1999). The iconography of these graceful and benevolent goddesses, sculpted in stone or in bronze, resembles that of Hindu goddesses such as Parvati or Durga and the Seven Mothers (*saptamatrika*). Goddesses from this time can only be assigned to one sectarian tradition or another by considering the context in which they are found.

If the Jain goddesses maintained their status as important objects of worship, from very early times to the present day, we see a somewhat different story in the case of certain Hindu goddesses. For example, the Seven Mothers first appeared in the Tamil country in the eighth century, and may even have had temples dedicated exclusively to them, but after the ninth century these goddesses were reduced to the status of "deities of the entourage" (*parivara devata*) of Siva. The location of their images became fixed in a corner of the temple complex. From the eleventh century onward, some of these goddesses were displaced even from this position; the images of the Seven Mothers were set up as

guardian deities in small village shrines. The goddess Jyeshtha experienced precisely the same gradual demotion over the same period of time. Meanwhile, starting in the eleventh century, consort goddesses (the “wives” of Siva and Vishnu) were more and more in evidence, mentioned in inscriptions, represented in bronze processional images, and enshrined in separate places of worship beside the temples of their Lords (Srinivasa Iyengar 1960; Orr 1999).

Characteristically “Tamil” forms of the great gods Siva and Vishnu had emerged by the year 1000. Images of Siva as Chandrasekhara, standing with the goddess Parvati at his side and holding an antelope and an axe, become plentiful during the eleventh century, and are mentioned in the later Saiva Agamas and in inscriptions that describe processions (Adicéam 1970-1973; Dagens and Barazer-Billoret 2000). The most famous of all South Indian representations of Siva, as the Lord of dance (Nataraja), appears profusely in the late tenth century, particularly as a bronze processional image (Barrett 1965). Padma Kaimal has argued persuasively that the popularity of this image is due in large part to the temple-building activities of Queen Sembian Mahadevi, whose sculptural program included stone relief sculptures of this form (Kaimal 1999). As for images of Vishnu, his manifestation reclining on his serpent couch was known from a very early period in the Tamil land, and his incarnation as the Man-lion (Narasimha) had long been popular. But before 900, there were very few depictions of Vishnu’s incarnations (*avatara*) as Rama and Krishna. In the century that followed, representations of these deities proliferated as bronzes, in shrines of their own in Vaishnava temples, and as the subjects of narrative panels sculpted on the walls of Siva temples (Barrett 1965; Balasubrahmanyam 1971, 297; Champakalakshmi 1981, 119-24, 135-47; Sanford 1974; Schmid 2002). Here again, as in the case of images of Siva, certain representations (e.g. Rama standing together with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana, or Krishna dancing on the serpent Kaliya) were particular to the Tamil country with respect to both their popularity and their iconography. It is clear that this period was an important one in the fixing of a distinctive regional character for religious art.

The images of sacred beings, whether Saiva, Vaishnava, Jaina or Buddhist, tell us something about how their worshippers conceived of the divine. The similarities in these figures – their beauty, their postures and attributes, their smiling graciousness, and a serenity filled with energy and wisdom – point toward shared notions of the transcendent, in the same way that devotional texts represent common ideas of the Lord’s power and grace. The inscriptions indicate further

that identical forms of worship should be offered to the Lord, whatever the sectarian context. Another aspect of this shared theology is the emphasis in inscriptions within all sectarian contexts on the Lord's presence at particular locations, often naming the Lord who accepted donations as the possessor and sovereign of specific places (Orr 1999; Orr 2000a, 23). Here is a clear example of continuity with the earlier devotional poetry. The Lord "graciously appears" during a procession; he also "appears" as the result of a donation or the establishment of an image. There is thus a close link between the notion of God's presence (a locational fixity), and God's activity as an actor in procession (an apparent mobility). The localization of the transcendent Lord, and his agency in choosing to dwell in a particular place, remains a major theme in the later sectarian literature (Young 1978; Shulman 1980; Nayar 1992; Davis 1997).

### Conflict and regional culture

Having focused on the commonalities among the ideas and the practices of sectarian communities in the Tamil country in the year 1000, we should consider the conflicts that were also present. Certainly the sectarian literature provides many examples of the denunciation of one group by another. We have seen the scorn of the Vaishnava preceptor Yamuna for the "witless detractors" of his tradition, and Sampantar's distaste for "wretched Jain monks"—an antipathy which takes on even fuller expression in the twelfth-century hagiography of the Nayanmars, the *Periya Puranam*. Meanwhile, we have the castigation of Buddhist hypocrisy by the heroine of the tenth-century Jaina work, *Nilakesi*. Yamuna's foes are orthodox brahmanas or Advaita Vedantins (and in one place in his *Agama Pramanya*, he does insert a put-down of the Saivas for not observing caste distinctions), but none of these groups is paying much attention to the Pancharatrins, whom Yamuna seeks to defend. Instead, Saiva authors are engaged in struggle against the Jainas, while the latter ignore them and instead seek to defeat the Buddhists.

This polemical pattern tells us something rather important about the construction of sectarian boundaries in medieval Tamil Nadu—namely, that this was a unilateral project, rather than an agreed-upon mapping of a society or a territory. It seems that, more often than not, we are glimpsing in these cases a situation in which similarity bred contempt, but the particular anxiety of any one group to be distinguished from its close neighbor was not necessarily shared. If we

follow the direction of the polemic (for example, the chain of denunciation from the Saivas to the Jinas to the Buddhists, or from the Srivaishnavas to the Vedantins), at the end of the line are groups that were actually rather poorly represented on the religio-philosophical scene in this time and place. Perhaps the easiest way to create a sense of religious community was to exclude a very weak, or even an imaginary, rival.

Notwithstanding the sense of struggle and competition manifest in some of our sources, in the year 1000 we are witnessing the consolidation of a shared regional religious culture. Religious communities brought a new level of sophistication to their shared regional language, Tamil, through distinctive uses, inventions and analyses. Iconographic styles and emphases were truly regional, and in part shared, among the worshippers of different gods and goddesses. Conceptions of the divine, particularly in terms of the presence of the transcendent in a particular location, were wholly shared not only by Tamil Jinas, Saivas, and Vaishnavas, but also by Buddhists, Christians, and Muslims. We have seen a number of features of religious life that were particular to this part of India and common to several of the sectarian communities: an emphasis on devotionism, an ambivalence about asceticism, an inclusive and enthusiastic valorization of the religious practice of temple donations in support of worship, a program of worship featuring fragrant and tasty offerings, and the establishment of institutions associated with the temples that served the needs of itinerant and mendicant devotees.

How was this regional religious culture brought into being? There are many proponents of the idea that this degree of consolidation and integration in a religio-cultural system could only occur by design, through a policy instituted by kings in collaboration with brahmanas, sectarian leaders and/or the officiants of local cults (Stein 1980; Chattopadhyaya 1994; Younger 1995). I think we are making a mistake if we interpret the regional matrix of the eleventh century as the manifestation of a royal program. A top-down model cannot possibly account for the depth of shared vision and practice that we see in the religious world of early medieval Tamil Nadu. A king might have a particular spiritual inclination, and he might have energetic religious advisors, but he could not have invented an entire religious worldview.

The array of resources drawn on by preceptors, poets and patrons reflect a long history preceding them. Some of the elements of regional culture went back a thousand years earlier, to the heroic and romantic classical Tamil literature and to the days when brahmanas,

Jainas, Buddhists, and devotees of gods and goddesses whom we now class as “Hindu” easily coexisted in the same universe (or the same town). The fact that worshippers in the year 1000 inherited this legacy, and that the temples they built in stone were related to a pre-existing sacred geography, indicates that their world was already composite and complex. Instead of imagining a world in which someone’s “policy” was bringing about change, it is more productive to think about the possibility that social, religious and political patterns were being generated at the local level. Here was the realm where the images of the gods were fashioned, where priests and devotees undertook their worship, and where poets and philosophers imagined their religious worlds.

### Abbreviations

- ARE *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy*. 1905-1978. Delhi: Manager of Publications. Transcripts of the inscriptions abstracted in the ARE were graciously made available to me at the Office of the Chief Epigraphist, Archaeological Survey of India, Mysore.
- IPS *Inscriptions (Texts) of the Pudukkottai State arranged according to Dynasties*. 1929. Pudukkottai: Sri Brihadamba State Press.
- SII *South Indian Inscriptions*. 1891-1990. Volumes 2-26. Delhi: Director-General, Archaeological Survey of India.

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2. The Saiva Siddhanta teaching lineages that were gradually establishing themselves in the far South also can be traced to northern India. The earliest direct reference to the planting in the Tamil country of a lineage within the important Golaki School comes from Kilaiyur. An inscription of 1041

describes this place as the seat of the preceptors of the Lakshadhyayi lineage (ARE 88 of 1946-47) (see Swamy 1975; Sivaprakasam 1983).

3. Support for *tiruppatiyam* recitations during the ninth and tenth centuries came almost entirely from non-royal donors. Younger's suggestion that the institution of hymn singing in the temples was a royal initiative, one of the pillars of the "religious policy of the early Colas," does not seem very convincing (Younger 1995, 133-37). It is inspired, perhaps, by the tradition's own story of the origins of the Tamil Saiva canon.

4. One of the earliest such references, dated 1015, comes from Uttaramerur, where Srivaishnavas were said to recite *tiruppatiyam* (ARE 181 of 1923). Fifteen years later, in the same place, there is a reference to the recitation of Nammalvar's *Tiruvaymoli* (ARE 176 of 1923). Other such references from the first half of the eleventh century are also found at Ennayiram (ARE 333 of 1917) and at the Varadaraja Perumal temple of Tribhuvane (ARE 176 of 1919) (Raman 1981; Balasubrahmanyam 1975, 155-57, 350-54).

5. A set of all 63 Nayanmars, a feature of many South Indian Saiva temples today, survives from the eleventh century at the temple of Peruntottam. Other such images have been found at Polonnaruwa in Sri Lanka, where the Cholas ruled during the eleventh century (Barrett 1965; Swamy 1972; Dehejia 1988b, 139-44).

6. The matha as a "monastery" housing a group of celibates and headed by a teacher of exalted rank (a characteristic institution of later South Indian Saiva Siddhanta and Srivaishnavism) did not come into being until the fifteenth century, despite the fact that both Saiva and Vaishnava lineages trace their origins back to the great teachers of the Chola period (Arooran 1981; Narayanan 1990).

7. The rivalry with Advaita is reflected in the story of the conversion of a thirteenth-century figure known simply as the "Vedantin," who was given the title Nanjiyar, "our" ascetic (*jiyar*), after renouncing married life (Zvelebil 1975, 164; Nayar 1992, 29-30; Orr 1995).

8. "The wide world is our home; generous householders in every town give us food. Public halls are our only shelter" (*Tevaram* 6.312.12, trans. Peterson 1989, 293-94).

9. Yamuna's references include passages from the *Parama Samhita* and the *Sanatkumara Samhita* that can be traced in the extant texts, and ones from the *Isvara Samhita* that cannot (Smith 1975).

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## **Part IV**

### **The perception of self and others**



## Chapter 14

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### Byzantium and its Neighbors

#### Krijnie Ciggaar

fallatio Grecorum; Grecorum sapientia  
—eleventh-century *anonymi* (Mommson 1894, 389)

The Eastern Roman empire was a Christian polity where Greek was the official language and Greek Orthodoxy the official religion. Members of the many minorities living in the empire had the ability to move up the social ladder, even to become emperors, only if they were Christian by birth or by conversion, Greek speaking, and (if they were literate) Greek writing. The Macedonian dynasty, in power since the ninth century, exemplified such upward mobility, its members being of Armenian origin. In the year 1000, which was the year 6508 according to the Byzantine era, Basil II (976-1025) was emperor of the Byzantine Empire, while his brother Constantine VIII was co-ruler—both descendants in the direct line of the Macedonian dynasty. Famous emperors like Leo VI the Wise (886-912) and Constantine VII



Porphyrogenitus (913-959) were among their ancestors.

Constantinople, the imperial capital, was a great political, cultural and religious hub, the largest city in the Christian world, renowned for its riches and luxurious life style. As a political center, Constantinople claimed to be the legitimate heir to the one and undivided (not to say indivisible) Roman Empire. As a religious seat, Constantinople hosted the headquarters of the Eastern Church, which claimed to be *primus inter pares* among the five Christian Patriarchates (although competing claims for the primacy of Rome were not really contested around the year 1000).

The Byzantines lived among friends and enemies separated by different religions, languages and cultures. Byzantine rulers had to find a balance among the competitive forces and ambitions of their varied subjects and surrounding peoples. The most prominent among Byzantium's neighbours were the Arabs of the Fatimid dynasty who had established themselves in Cairo in the 960s, the Bulgarians of the Slavic world, and – last but not least – the Holy Roman Empire and other successor states in Western Europe. These external competitors along with internal rebels had to be fought and held in check if the Empire were to stretch from the Danube to the Euphrates. Special police patrolled the borders and the roads leading into the Byzantine Empire, manifesting the power and influence of the central government and its desire to maintain boundaries with neighboring states. Changing historical circumstances and floating frontiers, however, had created bilingual communities in the border areas. Commercial goods, contraband and cultural influences could pass the borders, and so could political adventurers, terrorists, marriage partners, opportunists, or numerous captives conveyed against their will (Kazhdan 1991; Freeman and Kennedy 1986; Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev 1932, fasc. 3, 519 [311]; Dagron 1976).

Scholars often have claimed that the Byzantines disdained anyone who did not partake in their culture or share their religion. Here we will ask a number of questions: Did the conflicts of the Byzantine Empire always end in confrontation or were there other ways to keep enemies at bay? How was peace achieved? How did encounters with other cultures and religions affect the life of the Byzantines and their antagonists? Why, when and how were elements of other cultures integrated? Was the perception of the enemy stereotyped, or did it vary according to circumstances? To put it in a more general way, was there a process of integration or of segregation?

## The case of Basil II

Basil and Constantine, the sons of Romanus, were now the legitimate heirs to an Empire which through the efforts of their predecessor had won many triumphs and greatly increased its power (Psellus 1926-1928, 1: 2; Sewter 1966, 27).

First we shall have a look at the personality and ambitions of the ruler of Byzantium in the year 1000 who had to govern a vast empire. Basil II, born in 958, became emperor in 976 when he and his brother Constantine, sons of Romanus II (959-963), inherited the throne. Officially the two brothers became co-rulers, as is shown on Byzantine coins, in official chronicles, and on a Greek exultet roll (Whitting 1973, ill. 300-02; Scylitzes 1973, 314-69; Cavallo 1973, 55, ill. 10; Spatharakis 1976, 91-95, ill. 61). In a letter written in the French royal chancery we find both men mentioned as Orthodox emperors. The two names also figure together on a number of silks preserved in Western European collections (Vasiliev 1951, 230; Beckwith 1961, 98, 100; Beckwith 1970, 217-18; Voordeckers 1995, 237-38). From the beginning, however, it was Basil II who was in power, letting his brother enjoy a life of luxury, hunting and country life. Together they represent the two poles of Byzantine existence in ruling circles: a luxurious lifestyle enjoyed in palaces with all sorts of pleasures, and the military existence chosen by Basil II and some of his ancestors in the Macedonian dynasty (Jenkins 1966, 301-32).

The sober Basil II wanted to protect and preserve the empire as it had taken shape under his immediate predecessors, and if possible add new territories to it. He spent much time with his troops campaigning in the eastern and western marches. Even his free time was spent in a very productive way for a military man: he indulged in making war machines. The emperor was proud of his military career and his military achievements, as we see in a portrait in his psalter where he is surrounded by military saints with his enemies at his feet (Spatharakis 1976, 20-26, ill. 6). The emperor led the life of a monk, abstained from imperial adornment, and never married. He strove for internal peace, even if the means were not always very peaceful. Under his leadership, influential families were subdued and internal revolts severely suppressed. He showed little respect for senatorial families and, for his own political aims, he protected small landowners. The *History* of the Arab writer Yahya Ibn Sa'id<sup>1</sup> noted that the emperor was moderate where food and clothing were concerned, and that he did not want to be

buried in imperial vestments or in the Church of the Holy Apostles where emperors were usually buried. Instead, his body was carried to a monastery outside Constantinople (Yahya Ibn Sa'id 1997, 481, 483 [113, 115]).

Thanks to the sobriety of the emperor and his court, and as a result of his many conquests, Basil II bequeathed to Byzantium a treasury overflowing with money and precious objects. Michael Psellos (1018-1078), one of the great Byzantine scholars of the eleventh century,<sup>2</sup> described the emperor's astute fiscal policies:

He was careful, moreover, to close the exit-doors on the monies contributed to the treasury. So a huge sum was built up, partly by the exercise of strict economy, partly by fresh additions from abroad. Actually the sum accumulated in the imperial treasury reached the grand total of 200,000 talents. As for the rest of his gains, it would indeed be hard to find words adequately to describe them. All the treasures amassed in Iberia and Arabia, all the riches found among the Celts or contained in the land of the Scyths – in brief, all the wealth of the barbarians who surround our borders – all were gathered together in one place and deposited in the emperor's coffers. In addition to this, he carried off to his treasure-chambers, and sequestered there, all the money of those who rebelled against him and were afterwards subdued. And since the vaults of the buildings made for this purpose were not big enough, he had spiral galleries dug underground, after the Egyptian style, and there he kept safe a considerable portion of his treasures. He himself took no pleasure in any of it (Psellus, 1926-1928, 1: 18; Sewter 1966, 45-46).

From the writings of Michael Psellos we learn about Basil's character, his political views and his ambition to rule his empire as an absolute monarch: "The great reputation he built up as a ruler was founded rather on terror than on loyalty, for as he grew older and became more experienced, he relied less on the judgement of men wiser than himself." The emperor did not appreciate or stimulate cultural life, nor did he pay much attention to learned men or ask them for advice in the style of some of his ancestors. From one of his opponents he even learned the maxim not to listen to women when he needed some advice. Instead, he followed his own ideas and his own plans.

Although by the year 1000 Basil II had not yet subdued all his enemies or made peace with them, he had already achieved or was about to achieve some of his objectives. In the spring of that year, Basil returned from northern Syria where he had protected Antioch from Arab threats and had fought a number of battles with emirs who tried to

establish small realms for themselves, independent of the Fatimids in Egypt. He was now on his way to the northeastern frontier, to the Armenian lands. King David of Taik had died and the Greek emperor was to appropriate his lands, as had been "convened" by the two leaders on an earlier occasion (Dölger 1977, 790-92).

### **Byzantine interactions with Russia and northern Europe**

In the region north of Byzantium, the Bulgarians had been Christianized by Orthodox missionaries and, possibly for this very reason, had emancipated themselves from their religious godfathers. The political ambitions of the Bulgarian kingdom in the Balkans resulted in recurring conflicts and confrontations, leading to cruelties on both sides. The northern policy of Byzantium thus concentrated on finding allies and outflanking the Bulgar polity.

Most of the north was the home of peoples speaking Slavic languages, rather thinly scattered over the landscape; for practical reasons we may include among the Slavs the Scandinavians or descendants of Nordic adventurers who were related to the Rus of Kiev. These people were either very recent converts to Eastern Christianity or had still to be converted and incorporated into a Byzantine religion and ideology. From these peoples Basil II had started to re-cruit mercenaries, the so-called Varangian guard, in order to fight the Bulgarians and the other enemies of the Empire.

The Varangian guard, mainly composed of Russians and Norsemen, functioned as a legionary corps that accompanied Basil II on his campaigns, and thus became acquainted with Byzantine life, traditions and institutions. They may have contributed to strengthen Byzantine influence in Russia and the other northern countries where a number of Byzantine institutions like co-rulership and double portraits on coins were imitated, even in times when this was not relevant (Malmer 1981, 126-29; Sturluson 1977, 596). While campaigning on the eastern and southeastern borders of the empire, when they were not engaged in fierce battles,<sup>3</sup> the Varangians could catch a glimpse of Arab culture and life. As the founder of the Varangian guard, Basil II became well known in the northern parts of Europe, while the Byzantines became acquainted with northern Europeans, so different from their concept of civilized people.

In 988, for the mercenaries from Kiev who had assisted him in fighting the Bulgarians, the emperor expressed his gratitude (or rather

was forced to do so, according to some sources) by sending his sister Anna as a bride for Vladimir, the ruler of Kiev. Because his bride was a real *porphyrogenita* (a princess born in the palace and daughter of a ruling emperor), Vladimir now became brother-in-law of the great Byzantine emperor, a process that upgraded his realm. According to the early twelfth-century *Russian Primary Chronicle*, all the Russians were to undergo baptism and become Christians. Yahya Ibn Sa'id (1997, 423, 458 [215, 250]) adds that at the time of the marriage, "the great people of Russia . . . did not have church laws or religion" and that "the emperor Basil II sent metropolitans and bishops to baptize the king and all his people. His sister Anna built several churches in the land of the Russians." The scholarly discussion on Vladimir receiving the Byzantine emperors' title of *basileus* has not concluded yet, but later Russian sources "confirmed" the gift as authentic and dearly appreciated it (*Russian Primary Chronicle* 1953, 111-12; Obolensky 1971, no. 4; Meyendorff 1981, 14).<sup>4</sup>

The ensuing cultural colonization of these northern regions (an exception should be made for Scandinavia *per se*, which experienced only partial Byzantine influence) was the result of this master stroke by the Byzantine emperor. He had established peace with neighbouring Kiev and enhanced the prestige of the Patriarch of Constantinople. Religious dependency could easily turn into political dependency if things were done properly and quietly. From now on Byzantine canons, in all the fields of life, were in vigor in the north. In Russia, the Byzantine cultural and religious commonwealth manifested itself in architecture, theology, religious texts, painting and other art forms. The frontier opened for all sorts of contacts, including commercial and ethnic exchanges.<sup>5</sup>

Scandinavians and Russians, pilgrims and merchants who travelled southward were impressed by the religious and material splendour of Byzantium. A journey further southward enabled northern Europeans to take a look at the Arab world. On their way to Jerusalem they could visit Antioch, one of the five Patriarchates now in Greek hands, where a very mixed population lived. According to Scandinavian legend, after the Norse king Olaf disappeared during a northern sea battle it was here, in northern Syria and even in Jerusalem, that the king emerged and became a devote Christian, leaving here his military relics, his helmet and sword (Davidson 1976, 255). In Fatimid-controlled Jerusalem, northern pilgrims arriving at their religious destination could see Arab life in all its facets along with the Christian minorities who lived under Arab rule. They could visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

peacefully, before the intolerant al-Hakim ordered its destruction in 1009. Others travelled further to Baghdad, and it is hardly surprising that caliphate coins from this period are found all over Northern and Eastern Europe.

### Byzantine interactions with the Muslim world<sup>6</sup>

Generally speaking, the Byzantines did not care about non-Byzantines. The latter, however, could express their feelings. Interesting is an early tenth-century text that relates an earlier historical episode in which an Arab prisoner says that the Greeks denigrate the Arabs, claiming that the latter have no intelligence or culture. To his surprise, he meets a Greek who does not share this view (Vasiliev 1950, 423).

The Arab world was not so different from Byzantium, and parts of it had belonged in the past to the Byzantine Empire. However, Christianity had suffered a severe blow after the Arab conquests, and only minorities of Arabic, Greek and Coptic Christians had survived within Arab-controlled territories. In the course of time, three Patriarchates had been lost to the Arabs: Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch, of which the latter had been re-conquered in 969 and was now strongly guarded to prevent it from falling again in enemy hands. The Byzantine state perceived a continuous threat from the Arab world to expand its territory in Asia and Africa. The Arabs, in return, felt menaced by the Byzantines.

Basil II was successful in resisting the Arabs. From Michael Psellos we have learned that Basil got hold of all the gold in the Arab world, and Arab sources confirm that the Byzantine treasury was overflowing with money after the emperor's death. Discounting the boasting of Psellos, these statements confirm that the emperor managed well in his contacts with the Arab world, either by selling back captives, laying hands on treasures after victories in the open field, forcing the surrender of cities and villages, or encouraging commerce (Psellus 1926-1928, 1: 19; Hamidullah 1960, 298).

Territorial conquests, massacres, "forced" conversions, or long-lasting captivity for soldiers and civilians captured during clashes between Greeks and Arabs were constant threats on both sides of the border.<sup>7</sup> Mixed marriages, however, were another outcome of the confrontation. One has only to remember the Greek epic poem *Digenis Akrites*, where we find mixed marriages, conversions to Christianity

and, curiously enough, the hero eventually living in peace along the border, enjoying a magnificent palace and a delicious garden next to the Euphrates. There he receives the visit of the Byzantine emperor Basil, perhaps modelled after Basil II, who indeed visited the estates of great landowners in Asia Minor. Digenis Akrites is described as a mighty guardian of the Byzantine marches, eventually living in peace with his Arab neighbours, among whom he has relatives. He represents a class of great landlords – warlords sometimes – who lived an almost independent life on their large estates in Asia Minor and further east (Jouanno 1998).<sup>8</sup>

In the year 999, in order to free his hands for a fight with the Bulgarians, Basil II began arrangements for a ten-year's truce between Constantinople and Cairo. Greek sources are silent on the sending of embassies, so again Yahya Ibn Sa'id supplies information on the diplomatic exchanges. According to his account, Christian relatives of al-Hakim were members of the Fatimid delegation to Constantinople, including Orestes, Patriarch of Jerusalem, who eventually died in the Byzantine capital after a long sojourn (Hamidullah 1960, 297). Even more interesting is a reference in the so-called *Treasure Book* to a reception prepared for Byzantine ambassadors in Cairo. There was to be a display of riches including gold-embroidered tapestries and wall hangings, for which a special search was organized in the treasure rooms of the Fatimid palace.<sup>9</sup> It has been suggested that the Arabs imitated certain aspects of Byzantine court ceremonial. They may have copied elements directly from the Byzantine court after familiarity with embassies and interactions with high-ranking prisoners. Some striking examples are names like the Golden Palace, the Golden Gate, the *proskynesis*, the regulations for the city prefect and the rules he had to apply, to name but a few (Vasiliev 1950, 386, 393, 394; Canard 1951).

The role of trade is not yet clear because of the incompleteness of our knowledge, but it seems that regular commercial activities between the Arabs and the Greeks lasted far into the reign of Basil II. Italian cities such as Amalfi and especially Venice, when not prevented by the Byzantines, actively engaged in the inter-regional trade of the eastern Mediterranean (Nicol 1988, 39f). The Byzantines too were participating in commercial activities. Woven materials were among the list of products that crossed the Mediterranean in both directions; from the Byzantine side, furniture and wood could be added to this list (Canard 1964, 49, 55; Canard 1973, no. 16; Laiou 1991). In the *Treatise on Guerilla Fighting* written by the emperor Nicephorus Phocas (963-969), we read that merchants should be allowed to go into enemy

territory, pretend friendship for the emirs who guarded the frontier fortifications, and present them with gifts. By doing so, the merchants might be able to spy freely for the Empire (Dagron and Mihaescu 1986, 50-51, 180, 233, 249). Despite its overtly aggressive tenor, such a passage suggests that merchants crossed the border frequently and openly. Ambassadors at times could carry, along with their diplomatic gifts, some commercial goods that they could trade in the country where they were sent (Canard 1973, 39; Yahya Ibn Sa'id 1997, 460-61 [252-53]). The emperor interrupted commercial contacts only in 1016 in retaliation for the persecution of Christians in Egypt by al-Hakim. With a number of emirates in northern Syria, e.g. the emir Aziz al-Dawla, commercial relations persisted or were repaired (Yahya Ibn Sa'id 1997, 405 [37]; Honigsmann 1935, 108-09; Schlumberger 1900, 452-54).<sup>10</sup>

The Arabs had already absorbed Greek philosophy and Greek science and a considerable number of Greek texts had been translated into Arabic (Gutas 1998). The technological advance of Byzantium was gradually taken over by the Arabs. But around the year 1000 (before Byzantium developed a self-contained and traditional way of thinking that prevented innovation), the Arabs probably still marvelled at the waterworks and the water management of the Byzantines. The hydraulic technology portrayed in the garden of Digenis Akrites may speak for itself as symbol of Byzantine achievement.

### **Byzantine interactions with Western Europe**

Although the Byzantine Empire still had a direct frontier with the West in southern Italy, between Byzantium and Western Europe there were no military clashes around the year 1000. If confrontation there was, it took place on an ideological level. The secular ruler of Rome or a successful claimant to the imperial title in Rome could easily become the effective ruler of Western Europe, as had been the case in the days of Charlemagne (reigned 768-814). Some Byzantine ingenuity had been necessary to "integrate" Charlemagne into their explanatory system by considering him as a co-emperor ruling over the western part of the Empire. The main sphere of active disagreement aligned Constantinople, seat of the Patriarch, against Rome, former capital of the Empire and now a religious center trying to expand its political influence all over Western Europe. Between Constantinople and Rome there was a continual struggle for religious predominance, and even if on the whole the Byzantines respected the primacy of the Roman



Church based on the Roman administrative system, they felt and fed sentiments of jealousy. Both sides used all means – polemics, diplomacy, and espionage – to advance their own affairs and to achieve a hegemonic religious position within Christendom (Dvornik 1966, 124-53).

Western Europe was fragmented in a number of realms, but Christianity was firmly established and there was no need for internal missionary activities. Alongside the Latin employed within the upper echelons of the Church and the chanceries of secular rulers, the vast majority of the population spoke a variety of vernacular languages. Undoubtedly this linguistic turmoil contributed to the widening of the gap between the West and Constantinople, where Latin had been replaced by Greek as the sole official language for all the inhabitants of the empire, Greek and non-Greek alike.

Byzantine emperors tried to influence Western political life by intrigue, bribery, and sending friendly embassies carrying all sorts of gifts (cash, titles, artefacts, relics, etc.). The policy of stimulating marriage alliances was of recent date. In 972 the imperial court of Constantinople had sent the Greek princess Theophano to marry Otto II, the ruler of the German Reich who had been crowned in 967 (Jenkins 1966, 321-25; Wolf and Fussbroich 1991, 212-17). This marriage took place in Rome and the princess was crowned empress and co-ruler.<sup>11</sup> In the late 990s the Ottonian court sought another matrimonial alliance, resulting in an arrangement for Zoe, a daughter of Constantine VIII and niece of Basil II, to become the wife of Otto III (born in 980 as son of Otto II and Theophano). This was part of Basil's far-viewing policy to create a network of dependent relatives around his realm (Labande 1963). This second matrimonial alliance between the two most influential dynasties of Europe offered far-reaching possibilities. Otto III cherished fantasies of the old Roman Empire, a *renovatio imperii*. Did he dream of a polity that would include its Eastern half as well? Basil II did not have children, and his brother had only three daughters. The girls were not excluded, from the throne, but still . . . (Labande 1963, 474; Jenkins 1966, 324).

Otto III, "Greek by birth, Roman by empire" (Lattin 1961, 297), was three years old when his father died, and only eleven when he lost his mother; he was thus vulnerable and dependent on good confessors and reliable advisers. His teachers included Bernward of Hildesheim (great patron of the arts), Gerbert of Reims (with a pan-European background as adviser to royal courts, eventually becoming Pope Sylvester II (999-1003)), Johannes Philagathos and Gregory of Burtscheid (the latter two

Greeks from southern Italy). If one of them harboured ambitions not in the interest of the Ottonian empire, it meant that Otto, young as he was, had to stand up and make his own decisions, trusting in the loyalty of his entourage. When Johannes Philagathos, who had been sent as a legate to Constantinople in 996, was proclaimed anti-pope by the Roman aristocracy in 997, most certainly at the instigation of Greek envoys led by Leo of Synada, the emperor punished him severely and had him mutilated. By doing so he created enemies in Rome, the city where he was to live as a Roman emperor.<sup>12</sup>

Byzantine cultural influences were becoming noticeable in Germany. The presence of Greeks and Greek artefacts resulted in admiration and imitation of iconography, style, art forms, and even Greek customs and institutions. The young emperor grew up with traditions of the Orthodox Church, and he may have developed a certain interest in them, at least for a political purpose. Otto was far from carrying an icon of the Virgin into battle as did Basil II when he confronted Bardas Phocas, one of his opponents (Psellus 1926-1928, 1: 10; Sewter 1966, 36), but his gospel book was decorated with an exquisite Byzantine ivory depicting the death of the Virgin. On the last day of 999 Otto was in Rome, writing letters, not giving any hint that he feared the Day of Judgement at the turn of the millennium; he must have known that the Byzantines, with a culture far in advance of Western Europe, believed that they lived in the year 6508.<sup>13</sup>

On August 15 of the year 1000 Otto was again in Rome, where he celebrated the Assumption of the Virgin, one of the twelve great feasts of the Orthodox Church (Strecker 1937, 466; Labande 1963, 468s; Kitzinger 1980, 17s). The Western emperor participated in the procession, in the manner of Byzantine emperors and court officials. During the procession an icon of the Virgin actually met the icon of Christ, following the tradition as it existed in Constantinople. A special hymn seems to have been written for the occasion, the *Carmen in assumptione sanctae Mariae in nocte quando tabula portatur*. The hymn represents an actual meeting of East and West with the words "*dat scola Greca melos et plebs Romana susurros*." The beginning with the words "*Sancta Maria, quid est?*" is rather dramatic. True, the Byzantines would not often call Mary by her personal name, but the use of the Virgin's name is counterbalanced elsewhere in the hymn, where she is called the Theotokos in the Greek way. This was certainly done to please the Greeks, for a Greek minority lived in Rome and a few Greek monasteries existed in the Eternal City. Rome was an appropriate place for an encounter between the Eastern and Western

Churches, for Basil II had been intriguing to have a Greek pope installed on the papal throne (Vinson 1985, 1: 3s; 6: 8s). In any case, did not the Byzantines call themselves *Rhomaioi*?

Early in 1002, Otto's Greek princess arrived at Bari, capital of the Byzantine catepanate in southern Italy (which, in the following year, was to be besieged by the Arabs), only to learn that her fiancé had died shortly before, poisoned as some later sources have it. Had she actually married Otto III she would have been crowned co-ruler in the Byzantine way, as Theophano had become co-imperatrix earlier. Instead, the princess returned to Constantinople where, after the death of her father in 1028, she was to become co-ruler with her husband, and eventually sole ruler of the entire Byzantine Empire. She was one of the few members of imperial families ever to travel to the West. Thus the matrimonial alliance had failed to materialize, and so had the nomination of a Greek pope (*Annales Barenses* 1844, 53; Psellus 1926-1928, 1: 30s; Sewter 1966, 58s; Pognon 1947, 174; Waitz 1880, 32-33).

Other Western European countries had contacts with Byzantium but their political potential was hardly attractive to the Byzantines. In 988 the French court, in a letter written by Gerbert of Reims, then chancellor of the French king, had asked for a Byzantine bride for Hugh Capet's son in order to make an alliance against the German Empire. Doubts have been cast on the actual sending of the letter, but it is obvious that the French court wanted to compete with Kiev and at the same time tried to fight the growing influence of the Ottonians (Vasiliev 1951).

Cultural influences reached Western Europe more easily than Greek princesses. Even with a ban on the export of gold coins and high quality silks, there were enough luxuries available when the good will of Western rulers had to be "bought," including silks, ivories, enamels, jewelry, relics and reliquaries, not to mention cash with its special Byzantine iconography. The presence of all these artefacts had long-lasting effects on the arts of the West. They were "icons" of a civilization that was admired and envied at the same time.

The Byzantines as people proved to be more of a problem. In the eyes of Westerners, their arrogance and fraudulent behaviour provoked stereotyped qualifications like the *fallatio* of the Greeks, as we find in descriptions of the good and bad qualities of "the other nations" (Mommsen 1894, 389-90; Rentschler 1978). Such opinions may not have been unwarranted. The Greeks did not bother too much about non-Byzantines at home or abroad, disdaining them as barbarians. It is

remarkable, if typical, that the above-mentioned Leo of Synada, who spent a couple of months in the West, did not give any description of what he saw or experienced, as if he had no interest in life there. From the Byzantine viewpoint, one had to soften enemies with gifts of all sorts or, if necessary, confront them militarily, but it was better still if they could be ignored. No lists of qualifications of other people circulated in Byzantium. It is the very existence of such lists in the West that make them unique, reflecting a judgement or an interest – limited and stereotyped as it might be – in other people based on contacts or on second-hand stories. Even for the menacing Arabs, whose qualities were a negative *sevitia*, such contacts generated an impression that circulated in print and in society.<sup>14</sup>

The channels along which contacts took place are not always very clear. Information about the world outside Western Europe, be it Byzantium, the Arab world or the northern countries, sometimes depended on individual travellers or visitors. Saint Symeon of Trier, a widely travelled eastern hermit who visited many areas of the Byzantine Empire and various regions in Western Europe, finally settled in Trier where he took up residence near the Porta Nigra. He is thought to have been the bringer of “Byzantine news” to the West. Symeon was apparently the source for information on Basil II for the French chronicler Adémar de Chabannes (988-1034), who tells us how Basil made a vow to live the life of a monk if only he succeeded in subduing the Bulgarians. He also mentions the emperor’s problems with the newly arrived Normans in southern Italy, another source of threats to the Byzantine Empire (Wolff 1978).

## Conclusion

With Adémar’s information we are back to Basil II in the year 1000, facing a world full of threats and envy, but also full of promises. He had already established peace on his northern borders, he was planning to send a *porphyrogenita* to the West, and he was about to conclude a ten-year’s truce with the Fatimids, the main power in the Arab world. According to Michael Psellos, after many defeats in the early years of his reign, “he decided to abandon his former policy, and after the great families had been humiliated and put on equal footing with the rest, Basil found himself playing the game of power-politics with considerable success.” The period around the year 1000 may thus have been a turning point in his career (Psellus 1926-1928, 1: 18s; Sewter

1966, 44s; Jenkins 1966, 317s). While Otto III, whose days were numbered, was sitting in Quedlinburg indulging in fantasies about a restored Roman empire, his Eastern colleague was heading to Armenia where David of Taik had died and "left" his lands to the Byzantine ruler (Dölger 1977, 790-92; Böhmer 1957, 750). With peace on its main borders, the future looked bright for the Byzantine world.

## Notes

1. Around the year 1014/1015, the Christian writer Yahya Ibn Sa'id left Egypt and went to live in Antioch, which belonged to the Byzantines. Relying on written and oral Greek sources, he was well informed about the doings of the emperor who had campaigned several times in northern Syria and who had visited Antioch more than once.

2. Michael Psellos (ca. 1018-1078), one of the great Byzantine scholars of the eleventh century, became imperial secretary and thus had easy access to the official archives. He left a description of fourteen successive emperors and empresses, of whom Basil II is the first. Although he was no contemporary of Basil II his information has to be taken seriously, for in contrast to other Byzantine historians, his portraits were not exclusively set in a context of waging wars. Psellos was interested, instead, in the character and psychology of rulers. Several times he referred to earlier historians whose works are lost.

3. In the year 999, when the emperor was campaigning in Syria, his Russian mercenaries set fire to a church in which Muslims had taken refuge.

4. In this context it may be interesting to refer to what is probably a made-up story about the conversion of Russia. According to the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, Vladimir tested several religions before accepting the religion of the Greeks. When confronted with the Muslim way of life he simply dismissed it because of prohibitions on the drinking of wine (Obolensky 1974, 252), an attitude toward the Arabs shared with the Byzantines. Occasionally the Arabs also gave their opinions about the Russians. In the early tenth century, Ibn Fadlan called them the filthiest creatures of the world. We find the same judgement during the following century in the western source, *De proprietatibus gentium* (Mommesen 1894; Brønsted 1965, 265).

5. Obolensky 1950; Obolensky 1974, 253-59, 262; Davidson (1976, 97s) mentions slaves and furs for the Scandinavian world. Morrisson (1981, 134) considers the Scandinavian military who served in the Byzantine army as the main export "article." Although commerce with Byzantium went unimpeded, the extent of commercial contacts remains unknown, but may not have been very extensive, if we take into consideration the limited number of inhabitants of Eastern and Northern Europe.

6. Publications dealing with the image of the Arabs and the Byzantines in various sources hardly produce examples for the period around 1000 (Canard

1964, 35-56; Felix 1981, 46-79, 132-41; Hamdani 1974, 169-79; Jeffreys 1986, 305-23; Vasiliev 1950, 425-26). The review *Arabo-Graeca* could have been a platform for information on relations between the Greeks and their Arab neighbours, but it died a premature death. A great inconvenience is the loss of a text called *Book of the Science of the Greeks*, to which reference is made, and from which some shorter passages seem to have been incorporated in a later source (Vasiliev 1950, 428-30). Geographical reports of the Byzantine world of earlier periods seem to describe the experiences and souvenirs of former war captives.

7. Important captives could sometimes move freely during their captivity in foreign lands. Prisoners from the upper classes enjoyed certain privileges and perhaps provided a viewpoint that is too positive, considering their own position. Respect for one's prisoners was also in the interest of the captor. They could be ransomed and bad treatment was counterproductive. It appears that eating pork was not forced upon Muslim captives, as we read in some Arab sources.

8. Basil II was to become the model for the Comnenian dynasty, especially for Manuel Comnenus (1143-1180) who had to fight the Arabs and Turks on the same border. Alongside Basil II we see Digenis Akrites make his appearance as a hero in the same Comnenian context. Like Basil II and Digenis Akritas, Manuel Comnenus liked to be surrounded by military saints for whom he had a certain predilection (Magdalino 1993, 250).

9. During such receptions an exchange of gifts usually took place, matching the display of luxury. We do not know if visitors were shown around the treasure rooms and thus could see the architecture (Canard 1951; Canard 1973, no. 14).

10. The excavation of a wreck found at Serçe Limani in southwestern Turkey, revealing an early eleventh-century ship with a load of glassware from Syria, shall certainly throw more light on these commercial relations (van Doorninck 1990, 1991).

11. Her death was commemorated with a number of important publications, e.g. von Euw and Schreiner 1991; Davids 1995, 237-38.

12. We do not know if Philagathos was his Greek teacher as well, but we may conclude that he learned Greek from two glossaries that seem to have belonged to his library (Mütherich 1986, 16).

13. Böhmer 1957, 739; Lattin 1961, 243, 324-26; Wolf 1991, 2, 71, ill. 6. See also Mütherich (1986, 14) for a Reichenau *troparion* with a dormition illustration which should have been destined for him. It has been suggested that ivory carving was a monopoly of the imperial workshops; ivories would then have been destined for the ruling classes (Voordeckers 1995, 237-38).

14. How did Western Europe, around the year 1000, deal with menaces from the Arab world, while trying to keep "peace" with the Byzantines? How do we explain the negative qualifications in the *De proprietatibus gentium* for the Egyptians, the *astutia* (sometimes *stulticia*) *Aegyptiorum* and *sevitia*

*Sarracenorum* for the Saracens, whereas only the *sollertia Aegyptiorum* was given as a positive quality for the Egyptians and none was given for the Saracens? (Mommsen 1894, 389-90; Dvornik 1966, 124-53).

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## **Chapter 15**

### **Islam: Self and Neighbors**

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#### **Tarif Khalidi**

##### **Introduction**

When, in the thirteenth century, the historian Ibn al-Athir wrote his celebrated multi-volume work of history, he called it *Al-Kamil*, the “Complete” or “Comprehensive,” because he planned it to be all-inclusive in both time and space. Since its appearance, it has held its place as one of the most important historiographical products of pre-modern Islamic civilization. In form it is rigidly annalistic, but among its many unusual qualities are the frequent passages where the author reflects upon the significance of the events he chronicles. Composed under the shadow of the Mongol invasions of the central Islamic lands, its tone is often world-weary, even pessimistic. The historian is painfully aware of how vulnerable his world has become to vast enemy forces threatening it from both East and West. In the East, the Mongols are advancing with unparalleled ferocity, while in the West,

the *Reconquista* is steadily unfolding in Muslim Spain. The “territory of Islam” is caught in a huge pincer movement. But the weakness and disunity of the historian’s contemporary world is not a recent phenomenon, for he repeatedly castigates earlier Muslim rulers for their greed and their selfish disregard of higher Islamic interests. The heroes of Islam are certainly not its politicians and rulers.

The only shining historical moments around the year 1000 in Ibn al-Athir’s chronicle are the series of campaigns into northern India undertaken by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni. In an otherwise bleak portrait, with Muslims fighting each other from Spain to Afghanistan, it was particularly meritorious of Mahmud to have embarked on these invasions in order, as Ibn al-Athir tells us, “to atone for fighting other Muslims” (Ibn al-Athir 1851-1876, 9: 169). Perhaps out of a desire to save something from this tale of woe and ruinous conflict, the author appends to his *Annals* an obituary of the scholars who died in each year. He seems to imply that here is where one could find traces of the glory of Islam.

These reflections by the great historian might well prompt us to ask how Islamic civilization viewed itself in time and space, and how it viewed others, around the year 1000? To answer this question, I begin with a few theoretical observations about identity in general and the evolution of Islamic identity in particular. This will be followed by an attempt to draw a picture of the Islamic world at the turn of the first millennium under three broad headings: perceptions of time, space and the external world. In the conclusion, I will try to pull together the threads of the arguments advanced and to suggest how one might view the relationship between Islam and its neighbors.

### **The evolution of Islamic identity**

It may be helpful to begin by advancing a number of reflections on the nature and dynamics of identity in general. No sharp logical rigor is claimed for these reflections. Rather, they emanate from a long-term personal attempt to understand Islamic perceptions of cultural heritage and society.

To the historian of ideas, identity frequently presents itself as a series of concentric circles or, more dynamically, as ripples from a pebble dropped in a pond. It appears as if human beings have always carried within themselves these circles-within-circles of identity, and that these multiple identities are interchangeable, never fully stable. Some seem, like the ripples in a pond, much smaller than others, but unlike ripples

they expand and contract. A small identity can surge forth and become large, and vice versa. Identity configures itself in the rough and tumble of life, appearing in varying forms in response to the circumstances of human experience and contact. Thus, for example, I may present an identity to you through a designation that, I have reason to believe, may be the one most familiar to you. I do not necessarily identify myself to myself in the same manner when I reflect in solitude upon matters of concern to me. Yet the "outward" and "inward" identities interact constantly, manipulated by human will.

More problematic for the historian is the question of identity formation. Granted that identity is at any one time multiple and the subject of human choice, can a historian throw light on how "large" identities are formed? In other words, can one say anything historically useful about the manner in which social identities are projected on the large screen, thereafter picked up and adopted by the human individual? To answer this question, we may posit a link between identity and ideology and to think of identity as an ideology in miniature, a micro-ideology. For it seems to me that the arrival of new ideologies is often accompanied by conversion. The ideology in question will attempt to convert people and, in doing so, will gain adherents, i.e. those for whom ideology has passed into identity.

We may distinguish five "large" identities in history: the ethnic, the national/nationalist, the religious, the professional and the territorial. In the formation of most of them, one can detect a clear ideological pressure operating from top to bottom. In a typical case, a new elite with a new ideology assumes political control. Their ideology percolates downwards, at least as far downwards as the literate classes. These in turn translate the ideology into identity which they then "sell" to the general population through rhetoric and myth making.<sup>1</sup> Some identities, it is true, seem to be spawned by prevalent economic conditions, the experience of coexistence, or some overriding biological imperative. Nevertheless, this top-to-bottom movement is the most visible to the historian, the best-documented phenomenon of identity formation and adaptation.

With these general observations in view, I now turn to the specific question of the evolution of identities in Islamic history. My point of departure is a work of geography written almost exactly at the turn of the first millennium by the celebrated scholar from Jerusalem, Al-Muqaddasi, who died around that year. In the introduction to this work, one finds an unusual passage bearing on identity. Muqaddasi tells us that one distinguishing feature of his geography is that it is based on his wide travels throughout the contemporary Muslim world.

The author tells us that during these travels people called him by 36 different names or designations. Some were urban or regional, such as "Jerusalemite," "Syrian," "Iraqi" and so forth. Others were professional, such as "journeyman," "postman," "merchant," "poet," "artist," "man of letters" and so forth. And others referred to academic qualifications, such as "scholar," "jurist," or "Qur'an commentator" (Muqaddasi 1906, 43-44). For argument's sake, we might say that the author's 36 designations equal the number of circles of identity harbored by this "typical" person. Conspicuously absent are ethnic or tribal terms.

We may be witnessing here an important shift in the history of Islamic identity, from an earlier Arab/tribal identity to regional/professional/Muslim identity. This is a shift which probably occurred about a hundred years before the lifetime of Muqaddasi, but in his work we are now able to see its contours with clarity. If we attempt to trace the history of this identity shift, we find that the first 150 years of Islamic history were dominated by the formation of the Umayyad state (661-750) and an ideological structure that posited an Arab/tribal identity for entry into the ranks of the political elite. This ethnic/tribal identity was, of course, always under challenge, primarily by religious (i.e. Muslim) identity, which was to triumph with the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258). The pan-Islamic ideology of the new regime, together with its encouragement of "international" trade and industry, gradually displaced the earlier and more restrictive Arab identities. The triumphant Abbasid elite required the promulgation of a revised communal history that relegated ethnicity and tribalism to recessive traits and highlighted the newly dominant professionalism and urbanization.<sup>2</sup>

In sum, the manner in which Muslims around the year 1000 identified themselves appears to the observer to be quite different from the self-identity of earlier periods. The causes of this transformation seem to lie in the growing influence of pan-Islamic ideologies flowing from the arrival of the Abbasids, as well as the exposure to wider horizons of coexistence and trade encouraged by this pan-Islamism. But to round out this portrait of the Islamic world at the turn of the first millennium something must be said about the intellectual context of this shift in identity, more particularly the perceptions of time, space and the external world which accompanied the shift.

## Perceptions of time

Around the year 910, the historian Al-Tabari (d. 923) calculated the total age of the world to be 14,000 years divided into two equal eras, from the creation to Adam and from Adam to the coming of the Last Hour (*Al-Sa`a*). If for all practical religious purposes the calculation of the first era could be safely ignored, being only of antiquarian interest, the second could not be ignored if a believer needed to prepare to meet his Maker. However, determining the time between Adam and the year of the Hijra, which marked the beginning of the Islamic calendar, was problematic. Opinions on this issue varied widely among Muslim and non-Muslim scholars (Khalidi 1994, 118-22).

The circles of scholarly piety represented by Tabari do not seem to have entertained any immediate or compelling sense of an apocalypse about to overtake the world. The injunction against indulging in apocalyptic speculation stemmed from both the Qur'an and prophetic lore (Hadith). Many passages in both sources warn believers against such speculation because only God knows when the last hour will arrive.<sup>3</sup> Tabari conducted his computations in accordance with this restraint. He was not prepared to offer any authoritative personal view on when the final cataclysm would occur.

But the fascination with apocalyptic or millennial speculation could not be dismissed so easily. Tabari and his circles could not (or would not) exclude from consideration two subjects that gained currency as early as the eighth century: pious or prophetic traditions of the so-called "signs" (*ayat*) or "preconditions" (*ashrat*) of the last hour, and ideas concerning the "renewer" (*mujaddid*). The "signs" traditions detailed a number of marvels occurring in a sequence that would herald the coming of the end. The "renewer" traditions related how a scholar would arise to renew Islam at the beginning of every new hijri century. Taken together, these traditions represented a compromise between apocalypse and piety, a tame Sunnite version of the more revolutionary apocalyptic or millennial expectations current in Shi'i Islam.<sup>4</sup>

In general, Shi'i expectations centered on a savior figure who, in a typical phrase, would come to "fill the earth with justice after it had been filled with tyranny and injustice" (Madelung 1986b; Walker 1996, 71-77). For the Shi'ites of the tenth century, this superhuman figure was often a living or at least an ever-present possibility. The Sunnites, on the other hand, thought of him as an outstanding scholar and religious reviver, or else confined his role to the otherwise unspecified (and non-specifiable) end of days. For both groups, the moods of expectation were often stirred by great moments of historical drama.



Thus, the time of the early Muslim conquests, the early and destructive civil wars, and the arrival of the Abbasids produced surges of apocalyptic expectation (Madelung 1986a). It is my contention that the period between 950 and 1000 was another such moment of heightened hopes in the Islamic world, this time stirred up by the rise and rapid advance of the Fatimid caliphate.

The Fatimids were a hitherto obscure branch of the Shi'ite movement who managed, in a remarkable saga, to transfer themselves to the Islamic West, i.e. North Africa, and then to launch themselves back eastwards, at the head of a powerful army and an even more powerful propaganda network. In the year 1000, the Fatimids were at the very pinnacle of their power, ruling over an empire stretching from Algeria to Syria and sending emissaries propagating their "heresy" all the way to India. One pivotal aspect of Fatimid propaganda was that the savior had indeed arrived in the person of the Fatimid caliphs. The propaganda was to stir up millennial expectations and counter-expectations on a vast scale throughout the Muslim world. Poets such as Ibn Hani' or the royal prince Tamim ibn al-Mu'izz trumpeted the semi-divine attributes of Fatimid caliphs. Enemies of the Fatimids, on the other hand, responded by calling them a "conspiracy against Islam" or a "fraud" (Halm 1991, 162-81 and 1996; Corbin 1983; Walker 1993, ch. 13). Accordingly, the period around the year 1000 witnessed mounting concern over the significance of time throughout the Islamic world.

The unfolding drama of Fatimid history helped to focus attention on the various aspects in which time manifested itself: chronology, astrology, cosmogony, and eschatology. I believe that we may detect a renewal of popular and scholarly interest in these "sciences" in the second half of the tenth century.<sup>5</sup> On the plane of popular expectations, however, a real drama was unfolding at the turn of the millennium. This had to do with the reign of the Fatimid Caliph Al-Hakim (reigned 996-1021), which must surely rank as the most mysterious caliphate in Muslim history. Some of Al-Hakim's followers thought he was an incarnation of the divine, and he seems to have encouraged these views by his own extraordinary edicts and personal behavior (Canard 1971). The fact that his caliphate straddled the Hijri year 400 (1009/10) may well have lent these expectations an added sense of impending crisis, of a milestone in human history.

One might therefore argue that the turn of the eleventh century witnessed a distinct quickening in the perception of the flow of time associated with the arrival of a revolutionary dynasty in the heart of the Islamic Middle East. Coupled with this was the widespread use of a

single calendar throughout the Islamic world and the absence of any equivalent uniform calendar in the Christian West. Several Muslim historians of the period would comment on the confused state of non-Muslim chronologies as contrasted with the exactitude of the Muslim calendar (Khalidi 1994, 118-20). The coming of new centuries was noted on a wide scale in the Islamic world, a situation that did not obtain in, for instance, Western Europe at that time. One must not, however, lay overdue stress on this historical juncture. It is doubtful whether this mood of messianic expectation in the Islamic Middle East was shared in the Islamic Far East. And it is quite certain that such millennial expectations were downplayed, transformed or even rejected outright by Sunni Islam, for whom the awaited figure was a celebrated scholar, and the only true Messiah (or Mahdi) was a figure of the distant eschaton.

Nevertheless, this juncture in time was perhaps the last great era of millennial expectancy in Islamic history. True, other Mahdi figures continued to appear sporadically in later ages, but none were ever again surrounded by the same degree of eager expectation, cosmic significance and numerological speculation that attended the Fatimid caliphs.

### Perceptions of space

The centennial hopes of the Fatimid era were supposed to have world-wide implications and were not confined only to Dar al-Islam (the "territory of Islam"), this being the most common geographical self-designation of Islamic culture of that period. The word Dar can mean anything from "house" to "habitat," and speculation regarding the place of this Dar in relation to the rest of the inhabited earth began fairly early in Islamic scholarship. Quite apart from the global, indeed cosmic, reach of the Qur'anic text itself, Islamic scholarship displayed from its early days a keen interest in the site of various events of both mythic as well as "real" history. Of special significance in this context is one particular Qur'anic phrase (2:143), which describes the Muslims as a "median" or "midmost" community (*ummatan wasatan*). Qur'anic scholars of the classical period entertained several theories as to what this phrase really means. One common interpretation held that it relates to the way in which Islam is a sort of golden mean among world religions, steering a middle course between the alleged excesses of Judaism and Christianity or other religions (Tabari 1905-1911, 2: 5). Muslim geographers of the turn of the millennium had come to the

view that Islam was not simply the central revelation in a moral sense, but that the Dar al-Islam lay at the geographical center of the earth. God had thus chosen to place Islam at the very midpoint of His creation, and in every sense of the term (Al-Ya'qubi 1891, 233-235; Hamza al-Isfahani 1922, 6). In consequence, Fatimid propaganda regarding the coming of a new age had global and not merely Islamic repercussions.

By about the year 1000, Muslim geographers had developed a comprehensive image of the world around them and of the nations inhabiting that world. This image owed something to earlier Persian and Greek scientific geography, but it also owed much to the accumulated knowledge and experiences of what has been called the "Islamic oikoumene" (Hodgson 1974). Several Muslim geographers compared the earth to "a grape floating in water" with seven latitudinal zones intersecting this hemisphere (Ahmad 1966). The first two zones were furthest away from the sun and the last two nearest. The moderate climate of the central zones (i.e. zones three, four and five) allowed true culture to arise, and these were the zones along which Islam spread. The absolute center, the fourth zone, was the home of the great cities of Islam, including Cordoba, Kairowan, Damascus, Jerusalem, Baghdad, and Rayy. The scholars of these cities had little doubt that their civilization was pre-eminent, divinely ordained, and centrally located when compared with other world civilizations. Thus, even if the Dar al-Islam itself was plagued with internal conflict and politically disunited, Islamic civilization (what Ibn Khaldun would call *'umran*) was visibly superior to all its contemporaneous rivals. This was, of course, a comforting view, and typical perhaps of a scholarly outlook like that of Ibn al-Athir which held that the true achievement of Islam was the edifice of Islamic sciences and not its politics.

The geographers of that age had also noted the interdependence of their world, the manner in which God so ordained His earth that its various regions complemented each other, that the scarce resources of one region would be made good by the plentiful resources of another. The Qur'anic commandment (29:20) to travel through the earth and observe the wonders of creation was widely interpreted as an imperative to travel in search of knowledge and trade. This is why so many geographical works of the period doubled also as commercial guides and descriptions of the commodities to be found in various parts of the earth. Wanderlust was thus a religious obligation, a scientific duty and an invitation to engage in commerce. Paraphrasing the historian and geographer al-Mas'udi (d. 956), there can be no comparison between a scholar who stays behind and describes the earth

from the comfort of his armchair and another who braves the dangers of travel to see what no one has seen before (Mas'udi 1861-1877, 1: 9-10).

### Perceptions of the external world

The Qur'an is replete with references (6:11 and passim) to nations or communities (*umam*) and historical eras (*qurun*) whose fate the believer is urged to contemplate for moral lessons. It repeatedly calls upon the believers to remember how God elevated and then destroyed the great empires of the past. In the majority of cases, these empires remain unnamed, although the opening verses of chapter 30 (al-Rum) speak of the defeat and then imminent victory of the Byzantine Empire. These numerous and largely non-specific Qur'anic references to the glories and ruins of the past had the effect of stimulating interest among Muslim scholars to investigate and amplify allusions to nations and eras. By the turn of the first millennium, Islamic culture had come to possess a body of knowledge on the "ancient" history of the world unrivalled by any other civilization of that time.

Muslims viewed foreign nations around the year 1000 within a broad framework of popular culture and high culture. At the level of popular culture, images of neighboring nations were diverse but fixed, and national stereotyping frequently occurred in literature: Byzantine women were morally loose, the Turks were warriors, the northern Europeans were lazy and bestial, and so forth.<sup>6</sup> At the level of high culture, Muslim scholars made use of two basic models – the biblical and the civilizational – within which they molded their accounts of foreign nations. The biblical model involved a reformulation of biblical genealogies to make them more universal, and the attempt to make Islam the end product of the biblical scheme of history. For example, it posited Islam as the fourth of the kingdoms mentioned in the Book of Daniel, i.e. the realm that will last until the end of time (Abu Hatim al-Razi 1977, 53). According to the civilizational model, the world had witnessed the rise of seven (some scholars said four, some six, some eight) great nations, each of which had once constituted a single realm with a single language. One pre-eminent virtue, skill or attainment distinguished each nation or civilization. According to the most common list, the Chaldeans were the first farmers, the Egyptians were the first to perfect the magical arts, the Indians were the first astronomers, the Chinese were the first pictorial artists, the Greeks were the earliest philosophers, the Persians were pre-eminent in the art

of government, and the Arabs were the first diviners and soothsayers. Lying mostly in the central zones of the earth, these great nations of antiquity were ideally placed to invent what in sum may be called world culture. Later nations such as the Romans or the Byzantines were "sub-sets" derived from earlier prototypes (Andalusi 1985).

Beginning in the ninth century, the idea gained ground that just as Islam had inherited earlier divine revelations, bringing them to perfection, so too had the Islamic arts and sciences inherited and perfected the culture of ancient nations (Jahiz 1965-1969, 1: 75, 86). This appropriating attitude to the past meant that Islamic civilization was well placed to develop a new science of world history, expressed through a literary genre already represented by several distinguished practitioners in the year 1000 (Radtko 1990/1991). Most of world history appeared as a prelude to Islamic history. Here, the Muslim historian felt free to bring both chronological and logical order to the mass of materials, and to exercise skepticism concerning ancient marvels or supernatural events which piety or prudence might have prevented him from exercising against the marvels of his own culture. In all cases, however, there was an overwhelming sense of a world stage that was occupied before "us" by nations once at least as powerful or as civilized as "ourselves" (Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi 1953, 1: 73-75). An awareness of indebtedness to earlier nations, especially the Greeks, the Indians and the Persians, pervades this literature. Particular reading publics tended to have their own favorite ancient nation: the scholarly bureaucratic class (*kuttab*) favored the Persians, while the Greeks and Indians were the preference of Muslim philosophers and natural scientists.

There was little doubt in the minds of Muslim scholars at the turn of the millennium that all the great ancient nations had either passed away, bequeathing their knowledge to "us," or had become pale shadows of glorious ancestors. The contemporary Byzantines, Indians or Chinese may have preserved certain administrative or artistic vestiges of former grandeur but they had little to teach Muslim scholars. This sense of Muslim cultural superiority and the widespread belief in intellectual progress was particularly, but not exclusively, prevalent among natural scientists (Khalidi 1981). It was relatively easy for these scientists to determine that their scientific theories, their practice of medicine, and their astronomical calculations were demonstrably more advanced than either ancient science or contemporaneous science in other world regions known to them. This "optimism" was primarily intellectual and did not necessarily extend to the field of morality. In other words, a belief in the continuous

increase in knowledge could coexist with a belief in moral or physical decline. Hence, the belief in cultural superiority was intermixed with a tone of unease: will "we" too one day follow the other nations into ultimate decline? (Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi 1953, 1: 75).

Of special interest in this context is a Muslim historian and natural scientist who, approximately at the turn of the millennium, attempted to understand how his civilization related to others and to provide answers to some of the problems of cultural encounters. Al-Biruni (d. 1048) belongs to a small group of pre-modern thinkers who figure prominently in the cultural history of more than one world civilization, in his case the Indian and the Islamic. In his celebrated account of Indian culture and science, Biruni attempted to describe and assess, as objectively as he could, what we today might call the contributions of India to world civilization. The title of this work is revealing: *A Critical Essay on Indian Doctrines, Rational and Irrational*. Finding fault with earlier Muslim scholarship on India, he set out to give his reader an objective non-polemical account of Indian culture, religions and sciences. He regularly emphasized the familiarity of South Asian doctrines rather than their exotic or outlandish character, drawing frequent parallels with Greek and Islamic customs or beliefs. But most surprising of all is Biruni's manner of distinguishing between the commoners and the scholarly elite in all cultures. For Biruni, myths and legends attach themselves to all religions, including his own, while the elites have always adopted similar and rational views of, say, divinity. His argument seems to be that in any examination of a foreign civilization, the high culture of that civilization will aim toward a plateau of common human rationality (Yar-Shater and Bishop 1976).

## Conclusion

In the year 1000 the Islamic world was within a decade of completing its fourth century. In some quarters, that milestone was anticipated with varying degrees of hope or trepidation.

The moral high ground of that world was now firmly occupied by scholars ('*ulama*'). As a distinct and recognizable social class emerging as early as the ninth century, they had organized themselves into various parties, specializations and institutions. As a body of scholars, they had become a pan-Islamic phenomenon with their own distinct pan-Islamic identity. Much traveled, they could be certain to find their like in whatever Muslim city they happened to visit, from Spain to China. They had won several important battles with caliphs and rulers

over the freedom of conscience and expression. And while many had thrown in their lot with the various political elites, many also were surprisingly frank and critical in their writings regarding the practice and practitioners of politics. They displayed a pronounced self-confidence in their role as guardians of tradition (Hourani 1990). As these scholars looked around them, observing their own and neighboring cultures, most of them were in no doubt that Islam was the last religion and culture of the world. Islam, placed by God at its very center, had quite literally inherited the world.

The major religions of mankind do not normally advance very far in history without an increasing sense of loss. As the "best of times" recedes into the past, memory magnifies both former glory and present moral decline. Thus it was that an undercurrent of unease accompanied the considerable increase in the knowledge of ancient history among Islamic intellectuals. There was a foreboding that Islam would go the way of its predecessors; the contemplation of ancient monuments fueled speculation that physical decline is an inescapable process, that the ancestors were taller, stronger and longer-lived than people in the present (Biruni 1923, 77-84). It was a reiteration of the lament, found in most ancient literatures of the Middle East, that moral standards of the present are inferior to those of the past.

The views of one man-of-letters who wrote at the turn of the millennium seem to me to be an appropriate conclusion to this study of perceptions. Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi (d. ca.1010) was a scholar with very wide interests. His principal work, *al-Imta' wa-al-mu'anasah*, was a record of literary "sessions" conducted in the presence of a vizier, where either the author or some other luminary would hold forth on a subject. Session number six in that work is a discussion of foreign nations, couched in a great deal of rhetoric and verbal flourish, designed to instruct and entertain the reader or listener. If we strip away the literary adornments and attempt to reconstruct the author's views and arguments, we find a subtle formulation of attitudes that we may regard as "typical" of their age and of the scholarly class who held them.

Abu Hayyan's chapter begins with a clear admission of the equal presence of virtue and vice among all nations. The equal distribution of the virtuous and the vicious derives from what the author calls "necessity arising from their nature as well as through free choice," what we today might be tempted to call nature and nurture. If there are differences among peoples, these are insignificant and due to contingent factors like climate, custom and whim. Thus, good and evil people everywhere are said to "walk along the same path" (Abu

Hayyan al-Tawhidi 1953, 1: 74-75). But there is also a more general pattern of history, which according to Abu Hayyan is apparent to anyone who examines the history of nations with a clear and unprejudiced mind. This pattern is of "prime importance":

Every nation, in the earliest stages of its power and prosperity, is found to be more virtuous, more courageous, more desirous of glory, more generous, more eloquent, more rational, more wise and more truthful; this pattern applies not only to the generality of nations but to each individual nation, each individual group, tribe, clan, family or human being. This historical alternation from nation to nation is a sign of God's bounty upon all His creation (Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi 1953, 1: 75).

The insistence by our author upon the general applicability of this historical pattern of early greatness followed by decline suggests a view of world history where culture is transmitted almost like a relay-race from nation to nation. Curiously enough, however, it leaves the door open for the decline of his own nation, a concept that does not fit easily with the sense of cultural superiority possessed by Muslim scholars of the year 1000.<sup>7</sup>

## Notes

1. In a suggestive parallel from the Near East in late antiquity, Fowden (1999, 96) describes this pattern of formation of community identity as a "characteristic phenomenon of late antiquity."

2. For the struggle between these competing identities, see Khalidi (forthcoming). It is my contention that this new configuration of identity was to predominate throughout the Islamic world until the nineteenth century, when nationalist identities of a Romantic hue, and largely inspired by European hegemonies, began to win over numerous and powerful Muslim converts.

3. See Qur'an 7:187 and 33:63. For Hadith, see Muslim (1971-1975, 1:31), where the Prophet, in answer to a question about the time of the last hour, responds, "The person questioned [i.e. himself] knows no more about it than the questioner." For a parallel attitude in Jewish rabbinical circles, see Hoyland 1997, 307, note 154.

4. All canonical Hadith collections contain apocalyptic chapters that are attracting increasing modern scholarly attention. For a recent overview of this literature, see Hoyland (1997, 330-35). For the "renewer" traditions, see Abu Da'ud (1998, 4: 128), where the Prophet declares, "God shall send to this community at the turn of every century one who will renew its religion."

5. See, for example, the works of Hamza al-Isfahani (d. after 961) as discussed in Khalidi, (1994, 121-22). Halm (1991, 168-69) alludes to this issue.



6. See Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi (1953, 1: 71) and the poetry cited in Khalidi (forthcoming). For comparison, see Geary (1999, 128), where the author concludes, "Although Roman sources often presented barbarian peoples' ethnic identities as fixed, we have seen that new identities were constantly being established and transformed through contacts with the Romans."

7. Perhaps the nearest recent parallel is the sense of cultural superiority encountered among modern "developed" nations, combined with the view of world historians like Arnold Toynbee or Oswald Spengler that the West is becoming incapable of responding to historical challenges.

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## Chapter 16

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### Chinese Perceptions of Southeast Asia

**Billy Kee Long So**

Without taking into account the perception of others, we may find it difficult to comprehend Chinese political, economic, and cultural relationships around the year 1000. The perception of others, inseparable from perception of self, had to be culturally constructed, and should be understood primarily in a historical and contextual background. Yet, perception of others was also a cross-cultural phenomenon, accessible to the historian through a comparative framework that enhances our understanding of historical commonality.

Chinese civilization has a history of some four to five thousand years, depending on how one would define what civilization means. The Chinese developed representations of themselves and others that can be traced back to the formative years of their civilization. Among modern historians, a prevalent view of this historical Chinese perception may be summarized like this: The Chinese had a worldview that placed themselves and their Middle Kingdom at the center of the universe. They distinguished Chinese (*huaxia*) from others (*yidi*, usually

translated as barbarians) mainly by cultural differences and sometimes by racial considerations. This perception carried a strong sense of cultural superiority and supported a foreign-relations pattern that demanded the submission of all barbarians to the Son of Heaven, i.e., the Chinese emperor, under a tributary system. In its ideal form, the Chinese tributary system resembled the feudal system in Europe in that vassals retained autonomy and the overlord upheld a nominal suzerainty. Interactions between the overlord and subordinate parties were ceremonial and symbolic, but there were also exchanges of imperial gifts and tributary goods. Occasionally, the Son of Heaven would adjudicate disputes among subordinates or protect them from external threats. The prevalent view has it that this Chinese model was fully established in theory and in practice by the first century and remained a monolithic Chinese ideology dominating China's foreign relations over two millennia without any significant change (Fairbank 1968, 1-19; Rossabi 1983, 1-13).

Morris Rossabi and others have challenged this conventional view of China's monolithic pattern of foreign relations:

The Chinese dynasties from the tenth to the thirteenth century adopted a realistic policy toward foreign states. They did not impose their own system on foreigners. Diplomatic parity defined the relations between China and other states during these three centuries. The tribute system did not, by itself, govern China's contacts with foreigners. Throughout its long history, China has often changed the course of its foreign policy. It did not maintain a monolithic policy toward foreigners (Rossabi 1983, 12).

Following their lead, I attempt to show in this article that the conventional understanding of Chinese perceptions is limited, and that the picture of a monolithic Chinese representation of others distorts our understanding of China's foreign relations. I argue that Chinese perceptions of others had different facets, different faces. They distinguished others, or barbarians, as those who posed a threat to the Middle Kingdom and those who were culturally different but posed no threat. I also argue that the Chinese perception of others was not a static and timeless ideology for two millennia. It underwent significant shifts over time due to changes in the knowledge base from which it derived.

I mainly draw materials from two imperial encyclopedias completed around the year 1000. The first is *The Imperial Encyclopedia of the Taiping Era* (*Taiping yulan*), compiled in 1,000 volumes by Li Fang

and others between 977 and 983 (Li 1959). The second is *The Magic Mirror in the Palace of Books* (*Cefu yuangui*) compiled in 1,000 volumes by Wang Qinruo and others between 1005 and 1013 (Wang 1985). These two encyclopedias were compiled according to imperial order, primarily from existing collections of related subjects, with a view to provide necessary knowledge for the rulers. But there was understandably a process of selection. For the sections contained in these encyclopedias that deal with foreigners, we can assume that they more or less represented an imperial version or narrative about foreign countries. I focus my analysis on those parts that deal with Southeast Asia and examine their implications in comparative perspective, confining myself to maritime Southeast Asia and the mainland south of Vietnam and Burma. I will argue that there were diverse, and often overlooked, facets of the traditional Chinese perception of others, and that such perceptions were based upon and conditioned by different understandings generated, reconfirmed and transmitted over time within diverse political and cultural milieus. My main concern is not to produce a factual account of Chinese descriptions of Southeast Asia 1,000 years ago, but to elucidate the knowledge base informing such descriptions.

The Chinese began to identify themselves as a distinctive ethnic community probably at the end of the second millennium BCE. This sense of ethnic identity separating Chinese from others received reinforcement under the unified Qin and Han empires between the third century BCE and the third century CE, partly due to state promotion and partly due to the frequent movement of people and ideas under the direction of the government. Following the collapse of the Han, China experienced political disintegration for four hundred years, but the sense of Chineseness never lost its appeal. When China was once again re-unified by the Sui (581-617) and Tang (618-907) dynasties, the connotation of Chineseness had undergone enormous change. The most important feature of this new identity was an emphasis on a cultural dimension rather than racial or ethnic origin. The sense of Chineseness was basically defined by the extent of cultural assimilation or Sinicization (Fairbank and Goldman 1998, chs. 2-3). Following the collapse of the Tang and a fifty-year period of warlordism, the Song dynasty in 960 started to gain an upper hand over many local regimes. Within twenty years it was able to re-unify most of China under its centralized bureaucratic government. After 200 years of turmoil and civil wars, Chinese concerns about their identity now emphasized the variables of imperial establishment, legitimization, and even unification

as parameters for Chinese-ness. Ethnic origins became largely irrelevant. For instance, when the Song government produced official narratives about the Turkish regimes that ruled northern China in the first half of the tenth century, they accepted their rulers as legitimate Sons of Heaven (Chan 1984; So forthcoming).

When the government turned its attention to non-Chinese outside the political boundaries of the empire, the official concern was primarily Central Asia, or the nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples along the northern borders. During the tenth century, the semi-nomadic empire of Khitan Liao emerged in northeast Asia and destroyed the dynasty of Later Jin in northern China. Around 1000, the Khitan polity continued to be the strongest threat to the Song, constantly intruding into their northern territories and at times threatening their survival. The two empires finally concluded a peace treaty in 1005 but sporadic conflicts continued until they both fell in the early twelfth century (Tao 1983, 66-86). Under these circumstances, we would expect to see a negative, insecure and cautious Chinese perception of others around 1000, and this is reflected in the two documents I examine below.

The introduction of the "Chapter of Foreign Countries" in *The Magic Mirror* clearly states that between the early seventh and the late tenth centuries, the foreigners dangerous and harmful to China were only a few nomadic tribes outside its north and western borders, such as the Turks and the Tibetans. The rest of the foreigners did not create a security problem and they continuously paid tribute to China (Wang 1985, 956: 10a). More interesting is a section on the Foreign Races that provides the following general description:

The Foreigners were those who lived outside of China. Although they were born with the same physical substance as the Chinese, they possessed different characters that enabled them to survive in their harsh environments. Those living under Heaven must have a reason to survive. From high antiquity, they were documented in historical records. The most detailed account of them is to be found in the Han dynasty history. Their characters can be summed up like this: If they are weak, they will submit to China. Otherwise, they are defiant and uncontrollable. They often move from place to place like birds and do without any urban setting. Their population grows but their communities are scattered like stars in the wilderness. They rise and fall but you can never get rid of them. It is because they function as a shelter to shield off any unknown evils from the end of the world for China. Therefore, the sages of high antiquity made efforts to keep these peoples alive but submissive to the extent that they would not pose a threat of intrusion. These peoples kept their family names and were given recognition to rule in different

localities. Many claimed to have ancestors of divine origins. This is not necessarily unreliable, weird talk (Wang 1985, 956: 10b-11a).

In this stereotyped and negative narrative, we note that foreigners are those nomad or semi-nomad neighbors inhabiting the steppes to the north of China, a mobile people leading a nomadic style of life without urban development.

On Southeast Asia, we find in the *Magic Mirror* ethnographic accounts of seven countries and diplomatic records on 28 countries (Wang 1985, 956: 14a-15a; 957: 7a-11b), while in the *Imperial Encyclopedia* there are diplomatic records for over 30 countries that occasionally appear with ethnographic accounts (Li 1959, 786: 3a; 788: 9b). These narratives are either original texts or extracts copied directly from historical records written between the second century BCE and the mid-tenth century, with the bulk taken from standard histories written in the seventh century (Yao 1973, ch. 54; Wei 1973, ch. 82). In other words, they contain information concerning Southeast Asia that was long outdated. More importantly, this kind of knowledge came second-hand from foreign envoys paying tribute to Chinese courts, or from foreign traders arriving in China. New information was potentially available, for independent local kingdoms along the south China coast had developed flourishing maritime trade with Southeast Asia in order to support heavy military expenditures. As a result, important and updated knowledge of Southeast Asia was generated constantly through frequent commercial contacts, such as a set of maps on overseas countries submitted to the court in 1003 by the Prefect of Canton (Li 1979, 54: 1195). But the outdated perspectives retained in the encyclopedias came to represent Southeast Asia even though they did not constitute everything known by the Chinese: they were merely an official version.

These texts gave only sweeping accounts of most countries except the major ones, such as Lin-yi, Chenla, and Funan (in the southern part of modern Vietnam) Hsiang-sun in the Isthmus of Kra and Ch'ih-tu (in modern Malaysia) (Wheatley 1961). For these major countries, there were more detailed descriptions of politics and social life. In general, most accounts were factual descriptions of foreign customs that differed from the Chinese but with little negative commentary. Finally, none of these accounts gives any impression of a foreign country posing security problem to China; instead, they mention that these countries dispatched tributary missions to the imperial court. The narratives delivered a message that these were submissive countries, receptive to China's suzerainty. From these observations we can infer that the Song



government's view of Southeast Asia around 1000 was that of maritime peoples who were different from the nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples along the northern borders. Song China could deal with its friendlier and more submissive counterparts in Southeast Asia without a fear of invasion or humiliation.

The more congenial perception of Southeast Asians as others was reflected in Chinese policies on the maritime frontier. During the 970s, the Song government took control of the major seaports of Canton, Zayton, and Ningpo after subjugating local regimes. At this juncture the emperor made a policy decision that had a significant impact on Chinese interactions with Southeast Asia, when he ordered the establishment of maritime affairs offices at the ports in order to manage and encourage overseas trade. At first the policy was designed to promote the lucrative commerce of foreign merchants, but the new maritime laws also allowed Chinese merchants to participate (Yoshinobu 1983, 89-115; Clark 1991; So 2000). This was unprecedented. Extensive maritime trade had been ongoing between China and Southeast Asia for at least one millennium, but the management of those voyages lay in the hands of merchants from India or Southeast Asia; the Chinese were no more than passengers in such trading undertakings (Wang 1958). Now the opportunity to join Southeast Asian trade was thrown open to them. Of course, not every Chinese merchant in the port cities would take up this opportunity, for maritime trade demanded substantial investment and carried enormous risk, but there were bound to be some who sought fortunes in this market.

The Song government viewed Southeast Asian countries as potential economic and diplomatic partners, and thus established an open-door policy that was lacking in Chinese history before 1000. Yet this foreign policy was based on a perception of Southeast Asia formed from information and knowledge indirectly obtained through foreign missions and traders, some of it a thousand years old, most of it from the seventh century!

As a result of this open but misinformed government policy, Chinese merchants increasingly ventured into Southeast Asia and opened up new markets for organized and continuous trading activities. They began by concentrating in the most important maritime empire of Srivijaya whose capital Palembang in Sumatra was in the eleventh and twelfth centuries the major entrepot in Southeast Asia for the concentration and exchange of goods from East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean. In a single market, these Chinese newcomers were able to acquire business connections and accurate market

information. By the twelfth century, Chinese merchants, especially those from Fukien, became a major force in the commercial world of maritime Southeast Asia. Their contacts had become regular and their scale expanded. This was accompanied by the frequent arrival of foreign traders, some eventually settling in China (So 1998). Underneath the intensifying cross-cultural contacts was the widespread phenomenon of bilingualism or multilingualism among both foreign and Chinese maritime traders. So the open-door policy in fact created a new model of cross-cultural exchange between China and Southeast Asia and significant improvement of Chinese knowledge. Nevertheless, such new understanding and perception only enriched the details and updated the contents of the established official version. There was little change in the overall congenial perception that countries in Southeast Asia posed no threat to China, and that it remained worthwhile to maintain diplomatic and economic relations with such tributary subjects.

By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, there emerged a lot of official documentation and private writings about Southeast Asia, partly due to increased curiosity, but also in response to the practical demands of the business world. The most famous ones that are still extant today include the *Treatise of Foreign Lands* by Chao Ju-kua in the early thirteenth century which contained detailed accounts of over 50 countries overseas, including many in Southeast Asia, and detailed treatises on maritime commodities (Hirth and Rockhill 1966). This growing literature significantly enhanced Chinese knowledge of Southeast Asia, leading the Yuan dynasty, which inherited this maritime perception, to continue the open-door policy (Ptak 1995). Even down to the early fifteenth century, when Admiral Cheng Ho sailed his armada into Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean, the Chinese perception of Southeast Asian countries as potentially congenial diplomatic counterparts had not evolved too far from where it was in the year 1000 (Ma 1970; Levathes 1994).

To conclude, we may summarize the discussion into six propositions in the light of our empirical study:

1. Perception of others is derived from and conditioned by knowledge of others.
2. Knowledge of others is being created, accumulated, modified, selected and negotiated for specific purposes over time, whether intentionally or unintentionally.
3. Knowledge of others is further conditioned by the way cross-cultural contact takes place.

4. Perception of others is therefore hardly monolithic and timeless. It has multiple facets and it changes over time.
5. Perception of others conditions and justifies choices of foreign policy.
6. Foreign policy affects quality of knowledge of others.

These propositions reflect a need to broaden our understanding of the Chinese perception of others in the past so as to avoid the narrow, and largely distorted, narrative of a civilization that had been monolithic for millennia. They point to the need for re-examination of the conventional knowledge of civilizations as isolated blocks. Even in 1000, Chinese perceptions of Southeast Asian peoples were far from being identical with their perception of their neighbors along the northern border. The present study also shows the dynamic interwoven relationship among foreign policy, knowledge of others, and commercial contacts. It indicates the importance of congenial interaction between cultures: enhancement of cross-cultural contact, communication, and understanding.

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## **Chapter 17**

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### **Other, or the Others? Varieties of Difference in Indian Society at the Turn of the First Millennium and their Historiographical Implications**

**B. D. Chattopadhyaya**

Two points of clarification would be in order as a prelude to this essay. First, the availability of written records and historical sources of other kinds that can be firmly dated at 1000 is notoriously uncertain in India. Even epigraphic records of this time, which do bear dependable dates and are available in relative abundance, may not relate to what we may be looking for, whereas other epigraphs, slightly removed in date, may do. The world that we shall seek to reconstruct, therefore, will lack precise chronological limits and will be approximate. This, in a sense, is somewhat immaterial, because (as we shall try to demonstrate) formation of social attitudes is neither unequivocal at a particular point of time nor does it follow a fixed deadline.

The second point, more relevant for the purpose of the material that we shall present, pertains to the sense in which we consider the issue of the "Other." Within global historiography discourses, the "Other" may move through unceasing rounds of debate, but in narratives on Indian history we contend with fixities. Narratives which deal with the Indian world of 1000, whatever the sources of their ideological location, seem to regard this period as a watershed infused with a static notion of the "Other."

The prime example is the discourse surrounding events taking place around the year 1000, when Mahmud of Ghazni (reigned ca. 997-1030) launched military campaigns from Afghanistan into what are today Pakistan and northwestern India. Their remarkable success had far-reaching political and economic consequences, leading eventually to the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate around 1200. The culmination of Mahmud's campaigns was the pillaging of the giant temple at Somanatha in Gujarat, where his forces obtained a huge amount of booty that they carried off to Ghazni. Although, as I shall try to demonstrate, acts of religious vandalism could have varied contexts, including the making of political statements, this single series of events has dominated Indian historiography of the year 1000.

In the words of a scholar responsible for a much-used multi-volume nationalist history project:

In the fateful year AD 997 Abu-I-Qasim Mahmud, son of Sabuktigin, captured Gazni, developed a marvelous striking power and turned his attention to India.

Ancient India ended. Medieval India began.<sup>1</sup>

In this notion of a new beginning marking the "end" of ancient India, the sense of the "Other" stems from a perception of a hegemonic power's religious identity as the index of its otherness. Religious identity here is a source of intolerance and acts of vandalism; otherness therefore implies a measure of difference comprehensible only in terms of a binary polarity charged with animosity and violence. The construct of the "Other" in this historiography is a "Big Other" or Other *par excellence*,<sup>2</sup> marginalizing the differences that inhere within the structure of any history.

It is true that the sharp edges of this big otherness get toned down in historical writings that focus on movements toward synthesis (Chand 1976). Sometimes the technological, economic and administrative effects of the coming of the Muslim Turks and the establishment of the

Delhi Sultanate, rather than simple political hegemony of the Muslims, are highlighted to mark the advent of the medieval period of India.<sup>3</sup> Both approaches only somewhat dilute the religious underpinnings of the construction of the "Other," failing to reassess the image of the homogenous Muslims as the "Big Other" in the Indian social and mental world. In other words, they do not question whether the "Other" in the context of India of 1000 needs to lean on a "religious" understanding of cultural or ethnic differences.

As I shall show, the otherness that this historiography has succeeded in establishing since the colonial period is distinct from the otherness that pre-colonial history writing associated with the establishment of Muslim rule in India.

### **Preparing the problematic**

In order to prepare the space for my argument, I start with quotes from two texts later in date than the beginning of the second millennium but very much relevant to the ways in which the construction of the other can be reviewed.

A

Inside the temple,  
Wherever they turned,  
They saw king's men with drawn swords  
hacking away at animals, plunging  
their sharp steel into warm  
quivering flesh. Deep gashes  
opened, red blood flowed in spurts,  
and heads sank. Tongues were ripped off,  
the blood-dripping sockets of eyes were held  
impaled at the steel's edge. Limbs  
were torn asunder, chopped and minced,  
and piled in a corner. And  
with the blood-reek steaming, they baked rice.  
They decked the shrine with festoons  
made of tripe and the sheep's gut –  
which looked like bird-scares  
in maize-fields of sin.

The children who were to take  
Their turn saw all the ritual,  
the orgy of blood-lust set  
at the feet of Mari. The victims



that waited along with them,  
 the hen, sheep, goat, and the buffalo,  
 mingled their cries, bleat, bellow  
 and all in terrible supplication.  
 The earth shook with the echo of their yells.  
 The precinct walls with palings were hung  
 with strings of wreathed skulls, and  
 the whole thing looked as if Mari herself  
 was presiding over the scene of  
 carnage, looking through her million  
 bony faces, with devouring hunger  
 in her eyes (Janna 1994, 8-9).

# B

I very much lament for what has happened to the groves in Madhura. The coconut trees have all been cut and in their place are to be seen rows of iron spikes with human skulls dangling at the points. In the highways which were once charming with the sounds of anklets of beautiful women, are now heard ear-piercing noises of Brahmins being dragged, bound in iron-fetters . . . The waters of Tambraparni which were once white with sandal paste rubbed away from the breasts of charming girls are now flowing red with the blood of cows slaughtered by the miscreants. Earth is no longer the producer of wealth. Nor does Indra give timely rains. The God of death takes his undue toll of what are left lives if undestroyed by the Yavanas. I am very much distressed by looking at the fearful faces of the Dravidas, their lips parched by hot sighs, and their hair worn in utter disorder. The Kali age now deserves deepest congratulations for being at the zenith of its power; for, gone is sacred learning, hidden is refinement; hushed is the voice of Dharma; destroyed is discipline, and discounted is nobility of birth (*Madhuravijayam* 1957, 60-62).

The first quote is from a Kannada Jaina text written in early thirteenth century by Janna, the chief court poet of the Hoysala ruler in southern Karnataka. The gory description of killing and sacrifice for the goddess Mari, propitiated by the king, is a counter-image of the totally non-violent tranquility of Jainism. As in many other texts produced by the profound Jaina scholarship of the early medieval period, the passage proselytizes against violence and the false doctrines that mark non-Jaina forms of worship. The king, so long as he is a worshiper of the goddess Mari, is a "Deputy of the Lord of Death"; he can obtain redemption and his true *dharma* only if he takes to the path enunciated by the Jaina Tirthankaras. From the perspective of the Jaina doctrine, the goddess Mari, who can be propitiated only through the

performance of bloody sacrifices, represents the religious other, despite the presence of hosts of goddesses (*devi*) in the Jaina pantheon.

The second quote, from *Madhuravijayam*, a Sanskrit text of the fourteenth century, is a eulogy of a Vijayanagara prince by his wife. The prince undertook a number of campaigns against other rulers of southern India, climaxing in the defeat of the yavana (Muslim) ruler of Madurai in Tamil Nadu that brought the rule of the Sultans there to an end. The text describes, in no uncertain terms, the depredations of the Muslim rulers – the desecration of temples, the humiliation of brahmanas and the ruin of their habitats, the killings – all acts of violence destabilizing the social order. The restoration of *dharma* has to occur through the displacing of the yavanas, a feat which, in the text, necessitates divine intervention.

I am not arguing for the comparability of the “otherness” portrayed in the two texts—one in a peninsular vernacular language and the other in the more universal but exclusive Sanskrit (but written in the same region). For those who held out Jaina doctrines as a sure cure for violence, the goddess represented an “other” from whom escape was not only essential, but possible solely through recourse to a non-violent Jaina practice. The yavana “other” of the *Madhuravijayam* was of a different order, ethnically perceived, separate from the Tamilar (an inhabitant of the Tamil country) or Karnatakar (an inhabitant of Karnataka). The yavana was also linguistically different:

Screeching of owls in worn-out pleasure groves do not afflict me so much as the voice of parrots taught to speak Persian in the houses of Yavanas (*Madhuravijayam* 1957, 61).

These qualities, of course, only added to the negative quality of the yavana as the religious other.

As a starting point for a discussion on self-perception and perception of social entities outside the parameter of “self,” the texts cited above perhaps justify an argument defining “others” rather than the “other.” The alien quality in the “other” is the opposite of “self” and, therefore, implies a uni-dimensional, mutually hostile relationship. The presence of “others,” on the other hand, opens up the possibility of viewing culture and society in terms of multi-dimensional relationships encompassing many identities; confrontational spaces as well as varieties of negotiation exist in the presence of many opposed entities, implying varieties of difference rather than “big” otherness. In the following sections I shall elucidate a position in favor of the multiplicity of identities, and therefore of “othernesses,” by referring to

historical evidence signifying a different order than the historiographic construction currently in vogue.

### Heterogeneity of the "Self"

How does one comprehend how people conceived "self" within the physical space of the Indian subcontinent around 1000? Obviously, the conception of self, whatever may be considered as its constituent elements, is a construct which texts (because of the non-availability of other perceptions) may have self-consciously projected, or which we, in our search for identities, are able to locate in texts. Only, one must be careful that the texts used are of different varieties, representing different spatial units and viewpoints. Underlining one type of source or viewpoint would inevitably end up by constructing a uni-dimensional self.

Relevant texts of around 1000 carry over, from earlier centuries, a concept of the country, which can be considered a key element in how the text-writers perceived themselves. The country, called either *Jambudvīpa* or *Bharatavarsha* (sometimes with identical connotations and sometimes with the latter being only a part of the former), was an integral part of an elaborate cosmography. *Jambudvīpa*, or the "island of the jambu tree," was the extended ecological zone over which the emperor Asoka had ruled in the third century BCE. *Bharatavarsha* was conceived in territorial terms, lying north of the ocean (*samudra*) and south of the snow-clad mountains (*himavat*), where the inhabitants were all descendants of the archaic sage-king, Bharata (*Visnupuranam*, 2.3.1). The *varsha* (a unit in the cosmographic scheme) of Bharata corresponded to what we call the Indian subcontinent, and included a number of spatial and ethnographic segments ranging in number from five to nine. Conceived with reference to a central zone (*madhyadesa*), each of the constituent segments contained a number of ethnic-demographic locality units (*janapada*). Various texts repeated, and sometimes elaborated on, this scheme.

Let me take up one Sanskrit text of northern India, *Kavyamīmāṃsā* (The Discourse on Poetry), written by the famous litterateur Rajasekhara (ca. 880-920) who probably came from Maharashtra in western India but was associated with royal courts of both northern and central India. This book follows earlier texts in cosmography: the country (*desa*) is the universe (*jagat*) as well as a part of the universe. The earth consists of seven islands with *Jambudvīpa* at the center, identified with *Bharatavarsha* which, in turn, consists of various

countries, mountain ranges, and rivers, corresponding to northern, eastern, southern and western parts of the Indian subcontinent. Rajasekhara's preference, as a representative of the brahmanized elite, was for Aryavarta, the region between the western and eastern oceans and between the Himalaya and the Vindhya Mountains in central India. As an area roughly corresponding to northern India, Aryavarta was conceived as the land where "the ideal social norms based on *varna* [social status] and *asrama* [life stages] prevailed," and from where the styles and conventions followed by poets generally derived.

The centrality of Aryavarta in the brahmanical scheme of things, however, does not prevent Rajasekhara from describing the components of the other regions meticulously. Take, for example, his description of the region of the north: "Uttarapatha is beyond Prithudaka (Pehoa in modern Haryana State). There the countries (*janapada*) are Saka, Kekaya, Vokkana, Huna, Vanayuja, Kamboja, Vahluka, Valhava, Limpaka, Kuluta, Kira, Tangana, Tusara, Turushka, Barbara, Harahurava, Huhuka, Sahuda, Hamsamarga, Ramatha, Karakantha and others" (Chakravarti 1960, xvii). Consisting of ethnic groups of the past as well as of the present, the list includes the Sakas, Turushkas (Turks) and others of western Asian and central Asian origin. The list makes Rajasekhara's divisions of the country (*desa-vibhaga*) a schema that cannot strictly conform to the subcontinent; one has to locate this tenth-century schema within an earlier convention of cosmography within which Aryavarta, like Madhyadesa, is not simply a geographical region. It connotes a social order. The currency of that social order, defined by adherence to brahmanical norms of social status and life stages (*varnasramadharma*), could expand the limits of Aryavarta into other regions.<sup>4</sup>

The speech-habits of the inhabitants of different *janapadas* were as varied as beliefs in doctrines and ideas, which, according to Rajasekhara, could find their reflections in literary compositions. He cites examples of how the philosophy and doctrines of Mimamsa, Samkhya, Nyaya-Vaisesika, Bauddha, Lokayatika, and Jaina could produce different literary articulations that often expressed the antagonisms implicit in adherence to different ideas. Note the antagonism present in the following sentence, for example, used as an illustration of literary composition: "Even when chased by an elephant, do not enter a Jaina temple to save your life" (Chakravarti 1960, 8).

Rajasekhara elucidates the underpinning of cultural differences by characterizing the self as heterogeneous by definition. His seventh chapter dwells, among other things, on styles of speech, a major social

marker around the year 1000 when the vernacular languages were emerging (Pollock 1998):

The Sanskrit articulation of the inhabitants of Magadha and other countries to the east of Varanasi is good, but they are inexperienced in uttering Prakrit . . . Let the inhabitants of the Gauda country give up reciting *gatha* or let Sarasvati, the presiding deity of words (*sabda*) take birth in another form . . . The inhabitants of the Lata country are hostile towards Sanskrit (Samaskrtadvisah) and read Prakrit (Chakravarti 1960, vii).

“Self” and its “other,” as they are presented in textual perceptions of the world of 1000, thus do not have space for an Indian “insider” and “outsider,” demarcated territorially. Neither Rajasekhara nor writers who articulated their notion of the country and its culture in later centuries suggested homogeneity. To the composers of Sanskrit inscriptions in the Andhra country in the first half of the fourteenth century, for example, their own country identified as Tilinga could be described in the following terms:

. . . at first the whole world was submerged under waters; that on perceiving this, the god Narayana, assuming the form of Brahma, created all the worlds, in the midst of which was the earth adorned by the Golden Mountain and surrounded by the island and the seas; that in the centre of the earth and encircled by the salt seas was the *Jambudvipa* divided into nine *khandas* or continents, of which that extending from the Himalayas to the southern ocean was known as *Bharatavarsha* comprising many countries where different languages and customs prevailed; and that one of them named Tilinga, through which flowed many holy rivers, contained several rich towns and cities, beautiful mountains, impenetrable forests, deep tanks, and unassailable fortresses (Venkataramanayya 1987).

The heterogeneity within the “self,” for which the tenth century text *Kavyamimamsa* is a random sample, could be a source of potential and actual tension between the components constituting society. I focus on actual conflicts in two spheres: conflicts over political supremacy, and conflicts over the assertion of doctrinal and sectarian supremacy.

In the Indian world of 1000, political hegemony was a matter of ideology as well as material gain. Several types of text served ideological purposes. The political biography (*charita*) of a ruler underlined how important it was to subjugate adversaries in order to ensure sovereignty (Chattopadhyaya 1998, ch. 1). In addition, inscriptions enumerated, by using a mixture of metaphors, the glories of the ruler in terms of the countries he conquered. Subjugated countries

could be one of the segments of the Bharatavarsha as described by writers like Rajasekhara, or they could lie beyond the segments, and the actual military expeditions, in addition to their symbolic values, were real in terms of both intent and devastation. Let us take some examples from southern India.

The wars around the year 1000 between the Chalukya kings of Kalyana and the Chola kings of Tanjavur revived similar prolonged and bloody encounters between the earlier regional hegemony, the Chalukyas of Badami and the Pallavas of Kanchipuram, between the eighth and tenth centuries (Nilakantha Sastri 1966, ch. 8). The campaigns wreaked havoc of the same order as the Chola ravages in Sri Lanka (Ilam) around the year 1000.<sup>5</sup> In an inscription of 1007-08 from the Dharwad district of Karnataka, the victim (but later the victor), Chalukya king Satyasaya, describes one of these military campaigns:

When Rajaraja Nityavinoda Rajendra Vidyadhara, ornament of the Chola race, Nuramadi-Chola, came accompanied by a host of nine hundred thousand (men), halted at Donavure, and was ravaging the whole country, perpetuating murders of women, children, and Brahmanas, seizing women, and overthrowing the order of caste (Barnett 1983).

The rulers of these contiguous regions obviously were not engaged in a quest only for symbolic sovereignty; their political animosity toward "otherness" could degenerate to a level of violence that plunged the established social order into total turmoil (*jati nasa*).

Contest for political supremacy was a field engaging a number of players, within battle lines painted in several colors. To quote from another political biography eulogizing the achievements of the Chalukya ruler Vikramaditya VI (1076-1126), who allegedly emulated the heroic deeds of legendary Vikramaditya:

The ocean, filled with a circle of bloodstreams arising from destruction of the forces of the Colas, appeared to be red like the vermilion on the frontal globes of his elephants. . .

He, the mighty hero, having held his bow in victorious undertakings, the faces of the women of Dravida became extremely grey by their excessively hot breath. . .

Out of temptation for a kingdom great with one umbrella he snapped into a hundred pieces the numerous sticks of kings of high lineage, as if to prevent other umbrellas.

. . . who in battles, captured the elephant of victory of the king of Gauda and uprooted the great power of the king of Kamarupa.

By him the sea, polluted by the blood of the king of Kerala, was made to shun fear from the sage Agastya.

Out of fear from him the king of the island of Ceylon, being a refugee, rested in the hermitage of the sage who was the husband of Lopamudra (Banerji and Gupta 1965, 3: 61, 65, 74; 4: 18, 20).

Another "otherness," equally aggressive and perhaps socially more pervasive, appears in the multi-pronged contests propounding doctrinal and sectarian superiority, linked to political patronage and the institutionalization of specific denominations. Various sacred centers generated documents containing firm statements asserting their indisputable supremacy and claims to exclusive patronage.

An excellent dramatic expression of the world of sectarian doctrinal difference – present in Rajasekhara's discourse on poetry as well – is the allegorical Sanskrit play *Prabodhachandrodaya* (Nambiar 1971), written some time between 1042 and 1098 by Krishna Misra, associated with the Chandella court of north-central India. Represented as an ascetic of the "duck" (*hamsa*) order of the Advaita school, Krishna Misra is said to have written his play to teach the Advaita doctrine through the allegory of a fight between the evil and the virtuous. In this play, "The Rise of the Moon of Awakening," all the attributes of evil such as anger (*krodha*), harshness (*parusya*), greed (*lobha*), falsehood (*anrita*), and spite (*matsarya*) are associated with groups denying the authority of the Veda. These groups – the Charvakas, the Saugatas or the Buddhists and others – are either destroyed or flee from the battle between good and evil, truth and untruth. The Saugatas flee to Sindhu, Gandhara, Parasika (in modern Iran), Magadha, Andhra, Huna, Vanga and Kalinga, regions considered as impure in early *dharmashastra* texts. The refuges of the Digambaras (Jainas) and the Kapalikas include Panchala, Malava and Abhira, both core and marginal in terms of locational status, but they have to live hidden among the illiterate.

Allegory was but one way of expressing the acute sensitivity and violent opposition to what was seen as different and inferior. If, in Vajrayana Buddhism of eastern India, Buddhist divinities could trample upon Puranic Hindu deities,<sup>6</sup> the sword of *syadvada*, the doctrine of the Jainas, was a sure weapon which could any time fell the frail and "false logic" of the Bauddhas.<sup>7</sup> An aggressive Saiva order, with its devotees prepared to go to the length of cutting off their heads to demonstrate the superiority of their deity, simply reveals another face of the heterogeneous universe of doctrinal incompatibilities. I cite an example dated to about 1200 from Ablur in Dharwad district of Karnataka:

And when, on the god Somanatha having thus given his commands, Ekantada Ramayya was abiding, with complete indifference to other things, at the shrine of the god Brahmesvara at Abbaluru, some of the Jains, together with that Sankagaunda [one of the village headmen of that place], concerted together, and came to obstruct him, and with great resoluteness persistently sang the praises (of their own god) in the proximity of Siva, saying "Jina is the (true) divinity." When he heard that Ekantada Ramayya became very full of wrath, and said "It is forbidden to praise any other deity in the proximity of Siva": but refusing to desist, they continued vociferating, and then he spoke thus: "Who is it that creates the earth? who is it that protects it in the time of calamity? and further, who is it that is able to destroy it, when his anger becomes great?: it is that same Sambhu: and, in the face of the existence of him, who pervades everything, how can he (Jina) be a god, who came by chance into the world, and lived in bewilderment, and applied himself to practising austerity, and (only thus) attained happiness?: does your *Arhat* bestow gifts as Hara (Siva) does?: has he ever given even ever so small a thing?: (it is) from Hara (that) in former days the devout *Ganas* Bana and Dinisala, and so many others obtained boons." On his having thus spoken, the Jains said –"It may be so!, but why dost thou simply talk of former worthies?: cut off thine own head, under such conditions that all people may know of it, and offer it to him, and get it back from him, (and then we will admit that) thou art indeed a pious man and he is indeed the god.

When they had thus spoken, Ekantada Rama said "If I offer my head to (Siva) the foe of love, and obtain it back, what is the wager that ye will pay to me?" Whereupon they replied in anger, "we will pluck up our Jina and set up (an image of) Siva." Then, saying "Give me (it in writing on) a palmyra-leaf," and taking the palmyra-leaf that they gave, Rama brought (his image of) Siva into the presence of the Jains at the place where he was to straightway cut off his head and make an offering of it, and spoke thus: "If I have ever not said that thou alone, O Sambhu! art my protection without fail, and if my thoughts have ever gone astray after other gods, my head shall not go from me by the edge of this scimitar; but, otherwise, O Siva, let it roll down before thy feet:" and, thus speaking, the brave Rama with a loud shout, and with an unfaltering hand, set himself to cut off his head and lay it at the feet of Siva. . .

After the severed head had been exhibited in public during seven days, Hara kindly gave it back; the head became sound again without any scar; and Rama received it back, to the knowledge of all people. In much perturbation, all the Jains, in great distress, bowed down on the ground and seized his feet imploring him to abstain from destroying their Jina, but, refusing to abstain, he fell on it like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, and broke the head of the Jina. Just as a wild elephant in rut plunges into a grove of plantain trees, and, though alone, sweeps away everything before



him, so he, putting forth his strength, scattered forth the heroes who guarded it, and the horses, and the chieftains, and while the opposing ranks of the Jains, crying out that Mari . . . had come upon them, were ruining away in fright, he beat the Jina till it fell; and there he made them accept the holy Vira-Somesa (Fleet 1984; Lorenzen 1972).

For the devotee of Siva, presented in the document as being born and reborn through Siva's divine intervention as a savior of the "congregation (of Saivas on the earth) . . . afflicted among the Jains and Buddhists," breaking the Jina was the desired vindication and assertion of his own faith.

### **Heterogeneity and evidence regarding the "Big Other"**

The evidence of heterogeneity and difference presented above does not normally figure in recent narratives of Indian history. The "Big Other" of conventional historiography being the Muslim intruder, with a culture so wholly different that it can be presented only in terms of binary difference, it is time now to turn to a consideration of how Indian sources in the centuries around 1000 perceive Muslims and Islam. I will examine whether different communities professing Islam are perceived as a homogenous Muslim community, whether perception of communities professing Islamic faith changes over time, and the representation of sites of Islamic worship. These inquiries respond to the evidence cited above: if the reconstruction of a homogenous self is not possible, and if the language of contest, dissent and even violence is often a visible thread connecting different structural components, then is it logically possible to construct a homogeneous "other" as counter-image of that elusive self?

Indian sources refer to those who may be considered to constitute the category "Muslim" from as early as the eighth century, describing not Muslims but the ethnic communities of which they were members (Chattopadhyaya 1998). When mentioned as violent raiders, as often the Tajikas or Arabs were until the tenth century, they were portrayed as vile opponents of brahmanas and gods, the two pillars on which the social fabric rested. The Tajikas or the Arabs and the Turushkas or the Turks were therefore the enemies. At the same time, the Tajika, Parasika or Turushka, when he entered the arena of political struggle along with other contemporary rulers, became an adversary to be subjugated, a *leitmotif* characterizing the political records of perhaps all parts of India. To cite one record from western India, this is how the

Rashtrakuta King Krisna III (939-67) is lauded for his victories over other rulers:

Whose lotus-feet are constantly bowed to by (the rulers of) Pandya, Odra, Simhala, Cola, Parasika, Andhra, Dravida, Varvara, Tajika, Vamkina, Huna, Khasa, Gurjjara-Malavika (Sircar 1987).

The list represents a combination of what Rajasekhara would include in his *janapadas* of the four directions; in fact, the members of the list, including the Parasikas, Tajikas, and the anachronistic Hunas, would not be out of place in Rajasekhara's divisions of the country. The political adversary, in this kind of perception, is neither an "insider" nor an "outsider" in any territorial or ethnic sense; he is one who needs to be mentioned as having been subjugated, along with others.

Two other types of reference to the members of the Muslim community are normally not brought into focus during discussions of the Hindu-Muslim interface. One refers to a member of a community such as Tajika or Turushka who is not a raider or a political adversary but is viewed as a resident, as an active member of the local community. He can be a local administrator, governing a province on behalf of his sovereign, as was the case with Madhumati (a Sanskritized form of Muhammad), the Tajika governor of Samyana-mandala, representing his Rashtrakuta sovereign (Mirashi 1977, 71-5). Administrators such as this, or the common members of a local community with Muslim names, could naturally be involved in acts of donation or dispute settlement concerning local religious establishments that were non-Islamic. The documents generated by such occasions are not by any means informed by a sense of political or religious difference or by statements of identity, but concern themselves with local events and with participants in such events.

Another type of reference is to sovereign rulers who may happen to be of "foreign" Turushka descent. As I have shown elsewhere (Chatopadhyaya 1998) in a point that needs reiteration, a ruler of Turushka descent could be eulogized as a Saka ruler in a Sanskrit inscription in the same terms as a ruler of "indigenous" descent without reference to an "insider/outsider" divide. For example, in the heyday of the Delhi Sultanate, a Sanskrit inscription of the thirteenth century could say of Ghiyasuddin Balban—the Sri Hammira Gayasamdina of the inscription:

The earth being now supported by this sovereign, Sesa, altogether forsaking his duty of supporting the weight of the globe, has betaken

himself to the great bed of Vishnu; and Vishnu himself, for the sake of protection, taking Laksmi on his breast, and relinquishing all worries, sleeps in peace on the ocean of milk (Chattopadhyaya 1998, 52).

The Turushka/Saka Sultan here is considered as the able representative of the god Vishnu, the protector of the earth.

Citing such references embedded in the texts provides different images about those who tend almost invariably to be reduced to the undifferentiated category of "Muslim" in recent scholarship. The perspective which argues for viewing the structure of Indian society in terms of heterogeneity would be equally valid here; in fact, such a perspective would be essential for making sense of the various, often contradictory ways, in which the "Muslim" communities are mentioned in the sources of this period.

One must note, at the same time, that despite this heterogeneity, distinct communities such as the Tajikas, Parasikas, Turushkas and others could be viewed in terms of an umbrella identity not equivalent to a *janapada* identity. In other words, around 1000, a Tajika or a Turushka would not be identified (as a Muslim would be identified today through state/linguistic affiliation) as a Tilinga, Malava, Vanga or Kuntala—all names of distinct *janapada* units. The absence of *janapada* identity, combined with commonality of faith and social habits, brought these communities into an aggregate, distinct category much like the category "Hindu" coined in contemporaneous Arabic and Persian sources. However, it did not have religion as its primary reference point, using instead the "ethnic" concepts of Saka or Turushka or old-fashioned terms like *mleccha* or *yavana* (Thapar 1978; Parasher 1991; Talbot 1995). A chronological survey of non-Arabic, non-Persian sources, including writings in vernacular languages, would perhaps reveal that increasingly the terms Turushka, *mleccha* and *yavana* came to denote an aggregate category distinguished from the category "Hindu."<sup>8</sup>

The use of specific terms like Turushka, *mleccha* or *yavana* in a generic sense, as well as the interchangeability of these terms, is of great social and cultural significance. They point to exclusion from, and existence outside, a society defined in brahmanical terms and expected to adhere to a set of behavioral codes. The difference thus could not be specifically religious; the perception of difference was in terms of whether the members of the community perceived could be considered as members of one's own community or whether they were to be regarded as outside it.

Let me try to clarify this point by referring to the vicissitudes through which the term *yavana*, commonly used with reference to Muslim communities, passed. Derived from the name of Ionia in Asia Minor, the term *Yona* of the inscriptions of Mauryan emperor Asoka (third century BCE) referred to Greeks of both the Seleucid empire and his own empire. In the Mauryan period and in subsequent centuries, with the enlargement of contact with the Hellenistic world, *Yavanas* became the Greeks from Bactria in northern Afghanistan and those who came from the Hellenistic world or the Roman Empire. They remained distinct from the Sakas, Pahlavas, Tusharas or Kushanas of west-central Asia (Ray 1988). In southern India, the *Yavanas* figured frequently in Tamil and Sanskrit sources:

They were overseas westerners who came in ships, bringing gold, wine, and exchanged them for precious gems, crystal and pepper. They also settled in separate colonies called *yavana-padi*, *yavandar irukkai* or *yavanceri* in the capitals and port towns of the Tamil kings. They had dreadful weapons and were fierce fighters and were employed as guards to protect the gates of the royal forts. They spoke in violent tongue and were often quarrelsome. . . The *Yavanas* were great and skilful architects designing and constructing attractive structures like pavilions. Some of the royal palaces of the Tamil kings were designed and built by them. They were called *Yavanat taccar* (Nagaswamy 1995, 5).

The image of the *Yavanas* here is that of a different people outside the local social structure. Like the “Barbarians” (*mlecchas*), the *Yavanas* too could not be integrated into the social fabric. The image is not necessarily that of those who could be a danger to the established social order, although in Sanskrit texts of the Puranic genre, the *Yavanas* could indeed be a threat to society (Parasher 1991, 120-23). The danger, when the *Yavanas* were perceived as the “other” (not simply different), was thus not specifically to religion in a restricted, ritualistic sense, but to those institutions repeatedly highlighted as the signposts of social order (i.e. *brahmanas*, land endowments for *brahmanas*, temples, images of the gods, or *varna*).

This perspective on the gradual homogenization of distinct ethnic communities through the use of generic terms like *Turushka*, *mleccha* or *yavana* may help us understand why there is hardly any reference to the Muslims as a religious community, except in a specifically religious context; why a term like *mleccha*, which designated social outsiders like the hunting tribes, could also apply to the Muslim communities; and why reference to Islamic religious contexts and to the sites of Islamic worship could be made in terms which could correspond to

long-established Indic religious ideas and practices. For example, a mid-thirteenth century Sanskrit inscription of Gujarat refers to the construction of a mosque (*masigiti*), but mentions non-Muslim local patronage toward the construction of this mosque in the form of donations. The inscription also describes the mosque as a place of worship (*dharmasthana*) like a Hindu temple, and to the concepts of merit (*punya*) and sin (*pataka*) that would make the sacred congruous and identifiable with Hindu divinity (Sircar 1963). It is not, however, that the “otherness” of the Muslim communities, when they are perceived as the others, always indicates a demarcated social, rather than religious, space. In the twelfth century, “fire worshippers” and “infidels” destroyed a mosque in another Gujarat port town, requiring magnanimous reconstruction by the king (Majumdar 1956, 331). The “otherness” in this case, specifically religious, is integral to the kind of mutual exclusiveness which Vidyapati, court poet of Mithila in northern Bihar, articulates towards the close of the fourteenth century in his *Kirtilata*:

The Hindus and the Turks live at the same place. One ridicules the religion (*dharmā*) of the other. There is resonance of call for prayer among some [Muslims]; among some there is Veda recitation. Among some [Muslims], there is intermingling, among some there is separatedness (Sarkar 1981, 10-11; 92).

The *Kirtilata* goes on to elaborate the differences and the religious and other methods by which the Turks oppressed the Hindus.

Religious disputation was the theme of other texts as well, an excellent example of which is the *Hindu-Turk Samvad* of Eknath, the Maharashtrian devotional poet of the sixteenth century. Here a debate between a Hindu and a Turk regarding each other’s religious beliefs and practices is charged with recrimination and “full of the intensity of religious tensions and polemics.” What is interesting in this debate is the knowledge exhibited by the two contesting protagonists with regard to each other’s religion. Eknath is therefore able to close the debate with a “kind of idealised vision of the symbiosis the two communities would achieve,” which meant acceptance by the two protagonists that there is really no difference before God, the differences being man-made. The symbiosis extended to the stage in which origin myths could trace the different descents of the two communities, the Kafirs or the Hindus and the Yavanas or the Muslims, to the simple contest between two deities, Siva and Mahavishnu (Wagle 1997, 134-52).

There were, then, different perceptions of the Muslim community and of Islam, in the same way there was heterogeneity in the ways in which the non-Muslim society and religious beliefs, practices and institutions constituted an aggregate. The boundary between the self and the “other” could be sharply etched, as when the Yavanas were the special invitees of Kali who presided over the evil age, when they were destroyers of temples and annihilators of brahmanas—when, in short, they stood for the destruction of the ideal social order. In a perception like this, but only as late as the eighteenth century, there could be a distinction between the “country of the Yavanas” (*yavanadesa*) and “one’s own country” (*svadesa*). In 1773, however, the “Saka” king Ghiyasuddin Balban of thirteenth-century Delhi could still be seen in a text like *Parasaramacaritra* (a history of the Brahmin Peshwas of Maharashtra) in the following terms:

The king of the Yavanas protected this earth with justice . . . The four *varnas* which had accepted the Pandavas (the rulers of Hastinapura in the *Mahabharata*) as their chiefs accepted these (Muslims) as their own. The Yavanas reciprocated this honour and protected the tributary chiefs. . . They treated the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras, each according to their merits. They did not violate the *tirthas* and *kshetras* (religious centres) and they showed great consideration in maintaining them. They listened with great respect . . . to the debates of the *sastras* and the stories of the *Mahabharata*. However, some Muslims found such activities objectionable and contrary to their tenets and contemplated the dissolution of this amity (Wagle 1997, 138-39).

### Summing up

One of the major anomalies in modern historical narratives on India is that whereas all such narratives are prefaced with a pronouncement on India's essential unity in diversity, the narratives are almost uniformly unilinear and flat, with hardly any reference to how diversities can be integrated into the narrative. By saying this I am not proposing to question the credibility of the “mega-narratives” of Indian history (Metcalf 1995, 952); I am simply trying to point to the inadequacy of the accepted paradigm of the “self” and the “other” for “historical knowing” in so far as the Indian world of around 1000 is concerned.

In terms of historiography, two major opposites seem to emerge in this world between 1000-1200. One describes a rupture marking the end of ancient India and the beginning of the medieval. This rupture,

conventionally stated in terms of a change in the nature of political succession, is very different from the way political succession was viewed in pre-colonial historiography, even when the mlecchas or yavanas were seen to replace earlier dynasties (Chatterjee 1995; Wagle 1997; Chattopadhyaya 1998). The second opposite is conquest and resistance; in the apparent shift from political history to cultural history – to issues such as identity formation and consciousness – the hypothesis of cultural opposition has given rise to notions of the production of epics and counterepics (Ahmad 1963; Davis 1999, ch. 3), xenophobia (Pollock 1993), cultural fault lines (Joshi and Josh 1994, ch. 6), or ethno-genesis in frontier settings (Talbot 1995). These notions highlight a search for “self” and the “other” in the singular, as credible themes in various enterprises of history-writing on this period. The points one needs to consider are (1) whether working with sets of opposites is rewarding in taking note of all contexts in which texts, which are our main source of knowledge about the past, were produced; or (2) whether premises of static “self” and the “other” can always clarify the ambivalent and even contradictory conditions of human existence, as well as the texts they produce. Taking the Muslim as the “other,” as the monolithic site of Hindu resistance, will make one lose sight of the “others” who are present within the monolith.

Let me illustrate this by citing a line from an important piece of writing, from which I have already quoted in this essay:

Alauddin Khalji's conquest of the Yadavas of Devagiri (1296) signalled the entry of the Muslims into Maharashtra (Wagle 1997, 134).

This sentence blacks out completely the presence of the Muslim traders and of even governors on the western coast from at least the tenth century; for the author, the image of a conqueror is the only image that can fit the monolithic Muslim of history. This image further blocks any form of change for the Indian Muslim. The cultural animosity between Persian and Hindi which has been discussed in the context of medieval India does not take note of alternative tendencies, such as how Muslims of Bengal would have related to the creative phase of Bengali vernacular between 1338 and 1538 under the Bengal Sultanate (Sen 1960, chs. 5 and 6). The adverse linguistic image of the oppressive Yavana in the Sanskrit *Madhuravijayam* may come from one in whose house parrots were taught to speak Persian,<sup>9</sup> but considering the various cultural/linguistic regions of India, this is an image which can be supplemented by other images, not frozen in time, but shaping and reshaping themselves as a historical inevitability.

I would like to conclude this essay by juxtaposing excerpts from three different texts in order to suggest that accommodation of variety may be possible even when categorical assertion denying variety may also be the preferred generalization from the reading of a set of texts:

- A. Muslim impact and rule in India generated two literary growths: a Muslim epic of conquest, and a Hindu epic of resistance and of psychological rejection. The two literary growths were planted in two different cultures; in two different languages, Persian and Hindi, in two mutually exclusive religious, cultural and historical attitudes each confronting the other in aggressive hostility (Ahmad 1963).
- B. Sagara who was the crest jewel of the family of Pragvata . . . who had made pilgrimages to the sacred Satrunjaya and other holy places . . . in company with the saintly Gunaraja, the leader of a company of pilgrims, with the farman of the illustrious Sultan Ahmad—who was a person worthy to be the vessel of human life able to cross the mundane ocean which was being filled with the great acts of innumerable merits (Ranapur Jaina Temple Inscription of 1440).<sup>10</sup>
- C. In fifty-six languages one God is exalted with different words . . . Cleavages arise because of harangues in different tongues . . . I salute the sacred *Om* by which the God creator (*Narayan*) is known. Muslims salute him as *ya Allah* (*Yogasamgrama*, quoted in Wagle 1997, 142).

Irrespective of whether one is talking of 1000 or of a much later period, one should wonder if these texts can all be accommodated within the paradigm of the monolithic “self” and the similarly monolithic “other.”

## Notes

1. Munshi 1955, xxiii. In the preface to this volume (pp. xxxv-xxxvi), the remarks of the general editor of this series, R. C. Majumdar, were slightly, but not substantially, different: “The end of the first millennium . . . was a turning point in the history of India. India was on the verge of a great political transformation to which the nearest precedent is furnished by the invasion of the Aryans about three thousand years earlier . . . But the external invasion was not the only factor of importance. The internal change was also a momentous one. The collapse of the Pratihara empire brought into prominence new powers, known later under the collective name of ‘Rajputs,’ who played a dominant part in Indian history throughout the medieval period. They constituted a definite break with the old, and ushered in a new age both in political and cultural history of India.” It may be surmised that the role of the “Rajputs” in the preface has been highlighted because of their perceived



resistance to the rule of the “others” in the medieval period which, according to Munshi, began with the Ghaznavid invasion of Sultan Mahmud. Despite its integration into the nationalist discourse of history-writing, the disjunction in India is really a part of colonial history: “In that colonial history, India was already a bounded entity inhabited by two religiously defined communities. And in that India, British historians imagined Hindus as the original inhabitants and Muslims rather as they, the British, imagined themselves: as foreign rulers, as imperial rulers, who arrived as successful conquerors” (Metcalf 1995, 953).

2. Cynthia Talbot (1995: 696) attributes this characterization to Sheldon Pollock.

3. See, for example, the Preface in *The Cambridge Economic History of India* (Raychaudhuri and Habib 1982).

4. For implications of the statement on the limits of Aryavarta, made by Medhatithi, commentator on the *Manusmṛiti*, see Parasher 1991, 161.

5. The Tiruvalangadu Plates describe the Ilam campaign of the Chola ruler Rajaraja I: But Rama was excelled by this (king) whose powerful army crossed the ocean by ships and burnt up the Kings of Lanka (Nilakantha Sastri 1975, 172).

6. For example, at the Buddhist monastic site of Nalanda, images of the Buddhist divinities Trailokyavijaya and Aparajita trample upon Siva, Gauri and Ganesha. Heruka is represented as dancing upon a prostrate Jaina Tirthankara (Upasak 1977, 109-13).

7. In an inscription of 972 at the temple of Natha near Udaipur in south Rajasthan, the composer was described as one “who was the medicine for the disease of the Syadvada [Jaina doctrine], who always pulled down the doctrines of free-thinking and who was the thunderbolt to the mountains of pride of the Sugatas” (*Collection of Prakrit and Sanskrit Inscriptions*, 71-72).

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